

# Revolutionary Jazz - Postliterate - Medium

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“Instead of seeking to overcome capital, we should focus on what capital must always obstruct: the collective capacity to produce, care and enjoy.”

— Mark Fisher, Acid Communism

My thesis here is a simple one: jazz music contains all the elements of revolutionary affirmation. The way it understands collective ability, communication, and creation, is precisely all the elements needed for the growth of consciousness outside of capitalist realism. To be sure, I am not intending to say that blowing over rhythm changes makes a revolution, but rather that jazz is a form of consciousness-raising.

By “consciousness-raising,” I mean not only the proliferation of class consciousness, but also of real human experience outside of capitalist realism. It lifts humanity out of the shit, so to speak, making its own pocket of dignity in a society of injustice. It is, really, an act of [acid communism](https://my-blackout.com/2019/04/25/mark-fisher-acid-communism-unfinished-introduction/) → <https://my-blackout.com/2019/04/25/mark-fisher-acid-communism-unfinished-introduction/>, the making of altered states of consciousness for the purpose of seeing a world beyond capital. Jazz holds all of these elements; it is enough merely to recognize they are there.

Specifically, jazz vindicates two basic assumptions about humanity that capital must always suppress:

1. **Collective consciousness.** Neoliberalism presents society as merely the sum total of the individuals within it; in this view, the formation of

a collective consciousness which is larger than the individual and makes the individual larger, is revolutionary.

2. ***Individual development from within collective formality.*** Neoliberalism is fervently “individualist,” meaning it takes the individual as *nonpareil* and indivisible. Freedom, in this view, is freedom *from* the collective, not freedom *in* it. Jazz music, however, flies in the face of this prospect: it is the very acquisition of formalized knowledge, passed down from centuries and accepted by the larger collective, which in fact allows freedom. Few individuals can alone make or even imagine very much before they discover a collective wealth of possibility; it is in the tedious learning of collective possibility and knowledge that allows freer playing and freer possibilities.

The ongoing conversation in and about jazz, which has taken place formally for over a century now, is in total contradistinction to the logic of capital. However, this is not just theory; jazz has a long history of radical spirits from Miles to Joe Henderson, and I believe the existence of such spirits in the art form is no accident. Music, of course, played a huge role in the radical movements of the 60s and 70s, but there may also be something *uniquely* radical about the way jazz communicates its language in the collective setting. There is something very mature in jazz’s radicalism — it is not simplistic wails, nor primal screams, but art which places such anxieties and ambitions in a holistically stimulating environment (emotionally, intellectually, etc.)

What an acid communist revival needs is jazz’s sense of cooperation towards a common goal. What I essentially ask is that we learn to study, organize, produce, and enjoy in the way that jazz is played — and to be clear, this is not some plan to be forced, but is instead inspiration for the the stimulation of what already exists within us, and which capital constantly needs to suppress...