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Even though scholars have used audiovisual materials and methods in the field of ethnomusicology since its institutional foundation in the 1950s,¹ filmmaking has mainly remained marginal as a method for academic research and publication. Reflecting on this state of affairs, ethnomusicologist and filmmaker Barley Norton argues that "[f]ilm in ethnomusicology is still typically thought of as supplementary supporting data, rather than as a medium for argument or as a stimulus for theoretical discourse in words" (2015:1). However, this situation has started to change in the last decade: The creation of several study groups and the publication of book-length contributions have not only foregrounded audiovisual materials as subject of study, but also centered filmmaking as a valid mode of doing research on sound.² In this regard, the *Journal of Audiovisual Ethnomusicology* (JAVEM), launched in November 2022 by the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM), is a welcome addition to this growing discussion and, as a young scholar and filmmaker myself,³ I find that both its format and content provide strong elements to foster "the use of multimedia as a method for exploring music and its entanglements, and as a medium for presenting those explorations."⁴

In a nutshell, JAVEM is a website offering free streaming of a selection of peer-reviewed films relevant to the field of ethnomusicology, each one accompanied by a text

¹ For instance, Mantle Hood directed the film *Atumpan: the talking drum of Ghana* (1964) to present his research on several contexts surrounding the use of this instrument, and Gerhard Kubik (1965) recommended the use of footage as means toward musical analysis.

² See, for instance, the Audiovisual Ethnomusicology Study Group established in 2015 by the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM), Benjamin Harbert's study of music documentaries as form of scholarship (2018), or Leonardo D'Amico's historical overview of the use of filmmaking in ethnomusicology (2020).

³ See, for instance, my film *Buganda Royal Music Revival* (2021) and its review in *Ethnomusicology* (Hoelsing 2022).

⁴ <https://javem.org/> (accessed 2 August 2023).

discussing their respective content. Thanks to its conciseness and user-friendly design, JAVEM is an excellent portal to discover recent approaches to audiovisual ethnomusicology given the sheer abundance of resources available online, which can at times appear daunting to both newcomers and established scholars interested in the field. One can indeed spend countless hours searching for content on free streaming platforms such as YouTube or Vimeo, navigating subscription services like Documentary Educational Resources (DER),⁵ or accessing ethnographic collections hosted in archives such as the EVIA Digital Archive Project.⁶ Adding to the nebula of content, it has furthermore become common for scholars to accompany their written publications with separate websites featuring audiovisual material relevant to their argument. The Indiana University Press and Temple University Press, for instance, created the platform *Ethnomusicology Multimedia* to provide access to the audiovisual material linked to their publications in the field of ethnomusicology.⁷ In contrast to these scattered resources, JAVEM's first issue presents a focused engagement with six films recently done by researchers who specifically use filmmaking as part of their research method, a refreshing selection done by an editorial board itself composed of scholar-filmmakers.

On an institutional level, JAVEM is a milestone in the field of ethnomusicology. Whereas it is not new for scholars to review audiovisual pieces (as illustrated by the sections dedicated to audiovisual work in the *Yearbook for Traditional Music* or *Ethnomusicology*), JAVEM is the first peer-reviewed journal entirely dedicated to the use of filmmaking as ethnomusicological research. The work it publishes thus present useful antecedents for scholars wanting to justify their use of filmmaking to their respective institutions as a valid form of academic production. In this regard, several of the authors featured in this first edition produced their work as an integral part of their academic career. Marco Lutz, for instance, directed *Santeros* (2015) as the main output of a postdoctoral fellowship examining the social use of *batá* drums in Cuba, and Jennie Gubner's *Domingo en Plaza Almagro* (2014) stems from a series of short films made as part of her doctoral dissertation on various tango scenes in Buenos Aires.

More importantly, the six films presented by JAVEM in this first issue offer a noteworthy diversity of approaches regarding the use of filmmaking in ethnomusicological research, with each author developing specific strategies in terms of cinematography, sound design, editing, or distribution to formulate their arguments and reach particular audiences. For example, in *Mola'a Revisited: Reef Panpipes* (2017), Peter Crawford uses framing techniques, especially zoom shots, to convey his commentary on a panpipe ensemble in the Solomon Island. After the introductory intertitles, the camera meanders between adults and children dressing up for the performance and eventually pauses on an elderly woman tying up a skirt on a little girl. The camera zooms in on the girl's shirt and

⁵ <https://www.der.org/> (accessed 2 August 2023).

⁶ <https://eviada.webhost.iu.edu/Scripts/default.cfm> (accessed 2 August 2023).

⁷ <https://ethnomultimedia.org/index.html> (accessed 2 August 2023).

foregrounds its Harry Potter branding. Without verbally commenting on globalisation, Crawford's use of framing illustrates how simple camera movements can act as critical commentary on a situation.

Reflexivity has been a central concern in ethnomusicology since the 1980s, and some of the films published in JAVEM illustrate how this stance can be conveyed through filmmaking. Juan Castrillón draws attention to the technical mediations involved in the production and distribution of a film, and particularly to the ways screening contexts might impact the reception of one's work. The text accompanying his film *Visitors* (2022) opens with a notice, written in bold, stating that his work was made to be seen in a dark room to amplify the overall darkness of the film. Mainly composed of abstract shots made at night, Castrillón's film intends to convey through its visual aesthetic the opaque presence of Yuruparí ancestors visiting Cubeo Emi-Hehenewa communities in Southern Columbia. The film also includes a sequence featuring its own projection in a dark space, creating metacommentaries through filmic form. Other authors use reflexive methods to question the tenets of realism in documentary filmmaking. In *Ark: A Return to Robson Valley* (2022), Michael B. MacDonald collaborates with two festival goers to stage encounters and improvises discussions based on loose scripts collaboratively made, thus challenging the dichotomy between facts and fictions entrenched in documentation paradigms to reflect on the value of fiction in knowledge creation.

Applied scholarship is another prominent concept that has emerged within ethnomusicology studies in recent decades (see, for instance, *The Oxford Handbook of Applied Ethnomusicology* [2016]). JAVEM features several authors addressing this field and placing it at the heart of their filmmaking. While most filmmakers asked their film's subjects to approve the final cut, Jennie Gubner went further: She envisioned the persons she worked with as the main audience for her films. Arguing that "our digital attention span on computers is shorter than what it is in a cinema" (2022), she edits her footage of tango scenes in Buenos Aires in "evocative shorts" that can be used as promotional and mnemonic materials by the people involved in her research. George Mürer similarly envisioned his film, *Rauf and Azim* (2022), as a convenient format to disseminate the connected stories of two Hazaras musicians confined by the realities of their exile in Sweden and Iran. Using disparate footage ranging from an interview in Sweden to a performance in Iran played back on YouTube, Mürer intends to convey the feeling/concept of confinement through this fragmented material. This device, he explains, is a "gesture to an expansive body of experiences that remains inaccessible to the filmmaker, to the viewer, and, in many senses, to the subjects themselves in the cinematic present" (2022).

Currently, there are few other free online resources similar to JAVEM. Based in the United Kingdom, *Screenworks*⁸ is an online peer-reviewed journal presenting a variety of video essays addressing the field of media studies. Its latest special issue, entitled

⁸ <https://screenworks.org.uk/> (accessed 2 August 2023).

“Musicology on Screen” (2022), features seven works researching music through filmmaking. In addition to each piece’s research statement, *Screenworks* also includes two anonymous peer reviews thereby providing the critical discussion surrounding the film, which JAVEM could consider for its future issues. Finally, ethnomusicologist and filmmaker Petr Nuska recently launched his platform *visual.ethnomusicology.net*,⁹ an online catalogue listing around 1,500 films related to the field of ethnomusicology, from CNN documentaries to films directed by ethnomusicologists. As the search results also list the different paths to access the films online, this platform is a useful search engine entirely dedicated to the field of audiovisual ethnomusicology. Along with these other resources, JAVEM definitely provides a fertile ground for scholars and filmmakers who not only wish to sharpen their analytical skills to address the articulations of sound and image, but also might consider using filmmaking as a critical tool to formulate their arguments and share them with academic and broader audiences. In this regard, it is worth stressing that a wide range of work can be submitted to JAVEM: In addition to finished films, the journal also considers pieces close to completion in its review process and sends feedback to the authors, whether their work is accepted or rejected, an aspect that sets the journal apart from most of the film festivals and offers a valuable opportunity for authors to insert their work in a creative dialogue.

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⁹ <https://visual.ethnomusicology.net/about> (accessed 2 August 2023).

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