

# SO! Amplifies: Carleton Gholz and the Detroit Sound Conservancy

## Sounding Out! Authors

Blog post published October 16, 2014 in *Sounding Out!*

<https://doi.org/10.59350/t8c5p-ebg96>

## Abstract

SO! Amplifies. . .a highly-curated, rolling mini-post series by which we editors hip you to cultural makers and organizations doing work we really really dig. You're welcome!

## Keywords

Music (Subfield), American Studies, Archival, Black Studies, Digital Humanities, History



## Recommended citation

Authors, S. O. (2014, October 16). SO! Amplifies: Carleton Gholz and the Detroit Sound Conservancy. *Sounding Out!*. <https://doi.org/10.59350/t8c5p-ebg96>

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I founded the [Detroit Sound Conservancy](#) in 2012 in order to preserve what music producer Don Was has called “[the indigenous music of Detroit](#).” I also did it to preserve my own archive of Detroit sound related artifacts – oral history interviews, recordings, vinyl records, cassette tapes, 8-tracks, posters, t-shirts, buttons, articles, clippings, books, magazines, zines, photos, digital photos, notes, jottings, and other miscellaneous ephemera — knowing that if I could not help preserve the materials of an older generation of musicians, producers, DJs, writers, collectors, and fans, my personal archive and passions would not weather the storms (literal and figural) of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century – PhD or not. After a year or so of organizing virtually from Boston where I had found academic work teaching media & rhetoric, the DSC had its first major success with an oral history project for Detroit music, funded through Kickstarter. Donations allowed us to [throw a great party in Boston](#), form the non-profit, and push me home to work on the DSC full time.

The results of the move have already manifested themselves. This summer we had a [successful conference at the Detroit Public Library](#) — the first of its kind — dedicated to Detroit sound. We will hold another next year on May 22 dedicated to the key role of Michigan in general, and Detroit in particular, in the emergence of the modern soundscape. We plan to have the call for papers out this fall.



*October 14, 2014, interview with historian / musician Larry Gabriel and myself at #RecordDET, image courtesy of the author*

In addition, we currently have an organizing/promotional night called [#RecordDET at a downtown coffee shop](#) called [Urban Bean](#) so that we can continue to both record interviews and playback the sounds / stories we are learning from. So far we've interviewed a retired disco / house DJ, a record retail and radio veteran, and two blues historians and musicians.

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The long-term goal is to use the stories and sounds to propel us into a more sustainable future for Detroit's sonic heritage. [Recent local floods](#) have reminded Metro Detroiters just how vulnerable we are and continue to be. We must preserve or our sonic dreams will perish.

I imagine the DSC as the sonic dream weaver. As one of our inspirations, the Black Madonna in Chicago, says: We still believe.



<https://youtu.be/QkOIbGXwzXA>

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Carleton Gholz (PhD, [Communication Studies, University of Pittsburgh](#), 2011) is the Founder and Executive Director of the [Detroit Sound Conservancy](#), a lecturer in [Communication](#) at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan, and President of the Friends of the [E. Azalia Hackley Collection at the Detroit Public Library](#).

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