

# Bakersfield College - MUSIC B23 - Appreciation of Jazz

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## LIVE CONCERT REVIEW GUIDELINES

From the Course Syllabus:

**Two Live Concert Reviews** – 20% of Final Grade (2 x 100 pts. each)

Students will attend at least two live jazz concerts during the semester. I will provide a list of approved local events. Check with me for approval on any other events you find (it must be a legitimate college or professional level jazz concert to qualify). Each concert review will consist of **two (2) full pages**, typed in 12-point font and double-spaced, critically analyzing the performance and how it relates to the subject matter presented in the class. More detailed guidelines for writing the concert review will be provided in a separate handout. **Each Concert Review is due within two weeks after the date of the concert**, and none will be accepted after the last class session. *If extreme personal circumstances prevent your ability to attend a concert this semester, speak with the instructor ASAP about the possibility of completing an alternate assignment.*

Concert reviews will be graded on three things:

1. The quality, uniqueness, and depth of your written insights and observations about the music and the performance.
2. How well you deal with the terms and stylistic concepts that have been discussed in this class.
3. How well the appropriate information is organized and presented as a complete, two-page essay (this includes proper and correct use of grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.). **PROOFREAD!**

**IMPORTANT:** *This is not a group project. You may choose to attend a concert with a fellow student, but papers must be submitted individually. Papers that are too similar in writing style and information will be viewed with the utmost suspicion, and may receive a 'zero' grade.*

### How to write a Concert Review

There are a number of venues in Bakersfield that regularly put on concerts by well known, touring jazz groups, and there is also an excellent, accessible scene of local jazz musicians who perform in town regularly. Or, if you like to get out of town, a short drive to Los Angeles and you'll have access to a thriving jazz scene - you may even get the opportunity to hear someone you've read about in your textbook. Jazz is by no means popular music, but there is plenty happening if you take the time to look.

My recommendation to you is that when you go to a concert, take *extensive* notes during the show, and give yourself time to draft and refine those notes into a thorough, thoughtful review. You have two weeks from the date of each concert to submit your paper, so plan your time accordingly.

Many people feel very intimidated about being asked to describe a live musical performance. In class we will look at several different strategies for writing about music. If you feel you need additional help with this, schedule an office appointment with me or give me a rough draft to look at – I will be happy to help guide you through it.

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If you are still having trouble, the following points will get you started:

1. What was the name of the band/ensemble? Who was the leader?
2. Who were the musicians and what instrument(s) did each of them play?
3. Where and when was the performance (city, venue)? What did you think of the venue? Was the atmosphere conducive to listening to live music?
4. How long was the performance? How many sets? Was there an intermission?
5. Did the band perform original music, covers of standard jazz songs, or both?
6. If they performed original music, which members of the band composed the music? Discuss the compositional styles of the original tunes.
7. Give a good analysis of 2-3 tunes that really stood out from the rest. Be sure to include the titles and composers of the tunes.
8. How much improvisation did the band use? Any completely improvised sections? Or was the music mainly written down?
9. Were there any soloists who really stood out? Anybody who seemed like they were really pushing the limits of their instrument? Could you compare any of the soloists' styles with any of the jazz musicians that we've discussed in class (i.e., did the saxophone player sound more like Lester Young or John Coltrane, and in what way, etc.)?
10. Did the musicians seem to have a good chemistry and interplay with each other, or were they mostly just up there getting the job done? Did they look like they were enjoying the performance, or could you sense any hostility, competitiveness, hard feelings, or boredom on stage?
11. Did the band establish a good rapport/relationship with the audience? Who, if any of the musicians, did the announcing for the group?
12. How was the audience? Did they appreciate the music? What kind of reception did the band get? Any extended applause or standing ovations? Was anybody dancing? Audience participation, etc.? Did anybody get up and walk out?
13. Did you get a chance to talk with any of the musicians before or after the show? What were their impressions of their performance? What do they think of the band, the bandleader, the music, the venue, etc.? *Make an effort to get some of this inside information* – it will make your paper better and I'll be very impressed.
14. Of all the jazz styles we've discussed in class, what kind of style would you consider this music to be? Or did they employ a mix of different styles? Did they incorporate any influences outside of jazz (ex, rock beats, classical-sounding sections, world-rhythms, etc.)?
15. And finally, what were your personal feelings? Did you enjoy the performance? Why? If not, why? How was the quality of this performance compared to other jazz (live or recorded) that you've heard? I want to know what your deepest impressions were – be intelligent and creative with how you interpret and assess the music!!!

Some of these questions may not be relevant to your particular concert, or you may choose to include other information that you feel is more important. That's your call. However, do be sure you arrange all the information in your paper into a **clear essay format** with a proper **intro, body paragraphs, and conclusion**.

\*\*\* If possible, attach a **ticket stub, concert program**, or some other verification of attendance to your completed review.