

Music Appreciation (805-263-601), MATC; Spring, 2005

## **Assignment: Interview a Jazz Musician**

### **Summary of assignment**

Pretend you are a reviewer for a newspaper such as *Isthmus*. Interview a jazz musician. Write a paper. The musician you interview must meet the following requirements:

- must be living
- must be a jazz musician
- must have at least one commercially available recording

### **Sample questions**

- When did you begin playing?
- What instrument(s) do you play? What drew you to that instrument?
- What group(s) have you played with? What group(s) do you perform with currently?
- How do you promote yourself?
- What makes your music different from that of other local jazz musicians (or groups)?
- Who are your favorite jazz musicians from the past? Why?
- In your opinion, how important is it for a jazz musician to be able to read music notation?
- Do you perform jazz standards or originals? If you compose, how do you create new works?

### **Tips**

- Ask the musician if you may interview him/her, before you fire off questions.
- Musicians aren't good with deadlines! Contact more than one musician. If a musician agrees to an interview but does not respond to questions sent via email, be persistent.
- Choose good questions.
- Take notes during the interview (or record the interview, or conduct the interview via email).
- Write your paper as soon as possible following the interview.
- Be sure to give your paper an introduction, and a conclusion.
- Feel free to provide some background info on the musician, perhaps in your introduction.

### **Technical requirements**

Papers should be typed and doubled-spaced. You may submit either a hard copy, or an electronic copy (sent as an email attachment, or in the body of an email). Minimum length of paper is 2 pages.

Make sure your paper is not a simple "Q&A." Use paragraphs and complete sentences. If you quote a musician, be sure to use quotation marks. Try to remove the "fluff" from the musician's responses; don't be afraid to paraphrase the musician's remarks, or to leave stuff out. Overall, make sure the paper is coming from YOU. For example:

#### **DON'T DO THIS:**

Question: How do you write your songs?

Porter: Gosh, what a tough question. For me, it's a pretty mysterious process, kinda like how they elect the pope. I don't know that I have a particular method or anything, I just sit down to write and hope that people will like what I come up with. I usually start with a cool riff or something, try to get into a groove, and take it from there. I listened to a lot of Bird when I grew up, and I guess I've always got him in the back of my mind when I'm writing.

#### **RATHER, DO THIS:**

When asked about his songwriting process, Porter replied that he doesn't follow a particular method; in fact, he finds songwriting to be a "pretty mysterious process, kinda like how they elect the pope." He says, "I usually start with a cool riff or something, try to get into a groove, and take it from there." As far as basing his music on any sort of musical model, Porter reflects on the music of Charlie Parker. "I listened to a lot of Bird when I grew up, and I guess I've always got him in the back of my mind when I'm writing."

## **Timeline**

January 26. Choose your musician(s).

February 9. Contact your musician(s), and ask if it's okay to interview him/her. If you get a response from a musician, notify the instructor. Prepare to interview the musician as soon as possible after initial contact. If you choose to conduct your interview via email, send your questions by February 23. (If possible, cc the instructor on all correspondences.)

## **Some local jazz musicians**

Michelle DuVall & Doug Brown

Michelle DuVall (vocals)

Doug Brown (guitar)

Harmonious Wail

Sims Delaney-Potthoff (mandolin)

Maggie Delaney-Potthoff (vocals)

Tom Waselchuk (guitar)

John Mesoloras (bass)

Piccolissimo

Tom Ryan, aka "The Orange Guy" (piccolo)

Paul Lynch (double bass)

Kurt Lang (keyboards)

John Lombardo (drums)

Tony Castañeda Latin Jazz Sextet

Tony Castañeda (percussion)

Dave Stoler (piano)

Henry Boehm (double bass)

Raj Mehta (percussion)

Anders Svanoë (saxophone)

David Cooper (trumpet)

Qué Flavor

Roberto Aleman (vocals, electric bass guitar)

Ruben Marquez (vocals, guitar)

Alex Ballesteros (keyboards)

Roberto Rengel (percussion)

Manuel Vellon (percussion)

Frank Martinez (percussion)

Bob Jacobson (trumpet)

Greg Smith (flute, saxophone)

Ladies Must Swing (big band)

Erica Mather (piano)

Joe Scalissi (rat pack, vocals)

Joy Dragland (vocals)

Hannah John Taylor (flute)

Jeff Larsen (guitar)

Ed Fila (guitar)

Ben Sidran (keyboards)