

WRITER'S GUIDELINES – ARTIST PROFILE – FOR THE BJA NEWSLETTER OR WEBSITE:

The main objective of writing an artist profile is NOT to provide a complete biography or discography. This information can be found on the artist's website. Instead, your aim is to find something unique and interesting about this person AS A MUSICIAN, something that would be of interest to our readers, who are interested in jazz but may not be highly educated in the music.

Your first step is to read the artist's bio on his/her website and/or Facebook page. See where he has been playing, and with whom. Listen to samples of her music. Then peruse past issues of the BJA newsletter to see how other writers have approached an artist profile. You do not need to slavishly follow their examples, but you can get ideas.

The questions that follow are just SUGGESTIONS for how to proceed. You will not necessarily need to explore all these questions. You may find that your subject is expanding on one question in interesting ways, and you may want to continue exploring that aspect of her or his life as a musician. You can send the questions to the artist ahead of time, so he/she has time to think about the answers.

As you proceed, try to discern if some theme is emerging, to give shape to your profile. For example, the most interesting thing about a musician might be his early family influences. Or it might be her composing process – what or who inspires her? How does her composition proceed from that initial spark or idea? Or it might be the obstacles that the artist has had to overcome to get where he is today. Or it might be his vision for the future of jazz.

Don't get a preconceived idea that keeps you from listening and exploring—but also avoid going down rabbit holes that don't lead to a meaningful overall portrait of your subject. Remember, your profile will be limited to about 700 words, max. So you need to focus on what is most significant, unique, and interesting about this artist.

Your article should include direct quotes from the audience – with a little light editing as may be appropriate.

While your profile should give a positive view of the artist, it should not be full of gushy, extravagant adulation.

QUESTIONS:

CHILDHOOD & YOUTH

1. Where did you grow up? Did that place have musical influences for you?

2. Did you have musical parents? What music, if any, was played and/or song in your home? Did your family actively nurture your musical growth? If not your parents, were there other early musical influences?
3. What other instruments do you play? Or if you don't play another instrument, imagine if you did – which other instrument would you choose and why?
4. What got you interested in [your current instrument]?
5. What was your early musical education (formal or informal)?
6. Think of any interesting anecdotes about your time as a young fledgling musician.
7. When did you first start doing paid gigs?

LATER DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH AS A MUSICIAN:

8. Was yours a straight path toward a life as a musician or were there digressions along the way (i.e., other careers, military, etc.)?
9. *[If the artist is currently in a jazz studies program:]* What attracted you to the jazz program at [institution]? Do you feel that the program there is taking you in the right direction?
10. Who were your greatest musical influences and inspirations?
11. What is your favorite genre of jazz (i.e., straight-ahead, bebop, fusion, experimental or free jazz, big band, gypsy jazz, etc.)? What type of music do you play when you're not playing jazz?
12. What do you aim for in your playing? What is the most important aspect of the music for you and what you're trying to achieve musically?

CURRENT MUSICAL LIFE – *don't rehash mere facts that can be found on the artist's website. Instead, delve into some interesting aspect of his current work.*

13. Describe your current bands or ensembles - the ones you regularly lead, and/ the ones you regularly play in. Who are your favorite musicians to play with?
14. Talk about some of your major performances that were important to you in the last five years or so, including any tours in the US or elsewhere
15. Talk about your best or worst performance experience -- anything humorous or unusual from a tour or a live date.
16. What is your favorite type of gig? What kind of gig do you try to avoid?
17. Name the venues where you currently play (and with what band or bands). What is your favorite venue, and why? (based on how you were treated, acoustics, bandstand, regular dates, etc.)
18. When you are performing, what is your greatest fear?
19. Talk about any teaching activities. What is your philosophy/approach to teaching music?

20. Describe your composing process – maybe by giving examples of recent compositions or ones you are working on now.
21. What are your upcoming projects? Recordings, videos, performances, etc.?

YOUR OTHER LIFE:

22. What other "day gigs" do you have - either related to music, or not?
23. What do you like to do when you're not working or playing music? (i.e. other hobbies and interests)

YOUR MUSICAN VISION

24. what does music mean to you? What is your philosophy of music?
25. How do you feel that your music contributes to the world (or at least our corner of it)?
26. What direction do you think jazz is taking nowadays? What direction *should* it take?

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE THAT YOU WOULD LIKE OUR READERS TO KNOW ABOUT YOU AND YOUR MUSIC?
