

WRITER'S GUIDELINES – JAM SESSION REVIEW

Jam sessions are a vital part of the overall jazz scene in Baltimore. When you write about a jazz jam, aim to reach both potential participants and potential listeners.

Your focus will be both on the music and on the venue.

Start by perusing the Facebook page of the session, if there is one, or the Facebook page of the person who leads the session—see what they have posted about the session. Then peruse the website and/or Facebook page of the venue. Also peruse past BJA newsletter articles reviewing venues and jam sessions to get ideas.

Then you should GO to the venue to hear one of the jam sessions. You should probably contact the session leader and the venue owner or manager in advance to let them know that you are coming to do a review, and you may get filled in on some information in advance.

In focusing on the jam session, you will describe the main type of jazz performed – straight ahead? Funk/R&B? Gypsy jazz? Traditional swing jazz? Talk about the session leader and the host band members and some of the regular participants. In fact, you may want to get some quotes from any of these people. You should give details about the days and times of the session, whether there is a cover, if participants have to sign up, etc., and how long the session has been in existence.

Try to get some direct quotes – ideally from the session leader, but also from one or more participants and even from listeners.

Some venues that host a jam session may also host live jazz performances at other times during the week. Your article can mention these.

Use your creativity in capturing the “vibe” of the place. Is it a down-home neighborhood hang-out? Upscale cabaret? Quirky, artsy bistro? This will involve some focus on seating, lighting, décor, etc. Don't go on and on—just choose a few telling details that capture the essence of the place. For example, white tablecloths and candles, fresh flower bouquets.

Ideally, you'll have a drink and a meal there, too, to make some brief mention about the culinary offerings. What is the nature of the menu – “comfort” food, ethnic, eclectic? —although you're NOT writing as a food critic, and readers can usually find the menu on the venue's website.

You should give useful information about the venue – how to find it, where to park, etc. (Of course, you should first refer readers to the venue's website and/or Facebook page.) For example, take The Elk Room. There is a little map on the website. But it would still be hard to find the venue unless you know that first you locate a club called Tagliata facing on Fleet Street, then go through the open arcade to the rear and then on the left, find a black door with a little

red window. Or you might let readers know that the best parking for Germano's is in the Little Italy garage at Trinity & Exeter, for \$5.00. That sort of thing.

Photos should accompany your review – just use your cell phone, but try and get decent quality. A photo of a group of musicians playing is a good choice. Most articles have only one or two photos – take several, so that editors can choose the best ones.