Music reviews are designed to inform readers about a new recording that they may not have heard, and give them insight into the music. Historically reviews like these were  found in newspapers or magazines. Today these sort of reviews might be found on a music website or blog. These type of reviews are concise, generally under 1000 words, and are usually 3-4 paragraphs.

Professional reviewers are “experts” in the field of music they are reviewing, and so they often rate the recordings and sometimes make evaluations about whether a recording is “good” or “bad”. **You will not be doing this as part of your review**. The list of recordings you choose from are all considered great works of art and jazz masterpieces, so there is no need for you to rate or evaluate the recording you choose to review.

Here are 2 historical reviews of classic recordings, plus a more modern review of a contemporary work. As is the case for most jazz reviews, the entire album (or CD) is reviewed, with different tracks receiving attention in the review. Two of the reviews below are about albums (CD's) that include tracks that you have heard as part of your class audio materials. These are provided to give you a sense of the length, content and style used for this type of writing. You should use various aspects of these reviews as models for the ways you describe music when writing your review.

**Kind of Blue**

From Downbeat Magazine Oct 1, 1959

Miles Davis “Kind Of Blue”

Columbia CL 1355: So What, Freddie Freeloader, Blue In Green, Flamenco Sketches, All Blues

Personnel: Davis, Trumpet : Julian Adderley, Alto : Bill Evans, Piano (all tracks except Freeloader) : Wynton Kelly, Piano (Track 2) : Paul Chambers, Bass : James Cobb, Drums.

Rating: 5 Stars out of 5

This is a remarkable album. Using very simple but effective devices. Miles has constructed an album of extreme beauty and sensitivity. This is not to say that this LP is a simple one - far from it. What is remarkable is the the men have done so much with the stark, skeletal material.

All the compositions bear the mark of the Impressionism and touches of Bela Barktok. For example , "So What?" Is built on two scales which sound somewhat like the Hungarian minor giving the performance a Middle Eastern flavor: Flamenco and All Blues reflect a strong Ravel influence.

Flamenco and Freeloader are both blues, but each is of a different mood and conception: Sketches is in 6/8, which achieves a rolling, highly charged effect, while Freeloader is more in the conventional blues vein. The presence of Kelly in Freeloader may account partly for the difference between the two.

Miles’ playing throughout the album is poignant, sensitive, and, at time, almost morose, his linear concept never falters. Coltrane has some interesting solos; his angry solo on Freeloader is in marked contrast to his lyrical romanticism on All Blues. Cannonball seems to be under wraps on all tracks except Freeloader when his irrepressible joie de vivre bibles forth. Chambers, Evans and Cobb provide a solid sympathy backdrop for the horns.

This is the soul of Miles Davis and its a beautiful soul.

- This is a good example of a magazine review, from the time the album was released (1959). You have heard the song "So What?" from this album as part of a historical video performance in your text software. The review starts with a description/reaction to the overall album, and the second paragraph includes a reference to a particular track which explains the reviewers point about the music and influences (Impressionists, Middle Eastern sounds) The next paragraph identifies and discusses 2 tracks that are related (both are Blues) and describes each, including a mention of one of the musicians (Kelly) in order to make his point. The following paragraph discusses Miles Davis’ performances overall and also mentions the performances of other musicians on the record, referring to specific tracks. The final conclusion “paragraph” is short and to the point, only one sentence, but it conveys a full thought and, in this case, more is not needed.

**A Love Supreme**

Record Review

John ColtraneA Love Supreme- Impulse 77 - Part I - Acknowledgement; Part II - Resolution; Part III - Pursuance; Part IV - Psalm

Personnel: Coltrane, tenor saxophone; McCoy Tyner; piano, Jimmy Garrison, bass, Elvin Jones, drums

Rating 5 stars out of 5

During most of Coltrane’s career, he has been admired and damned for various things - this technical facility and his ability to run chord changes with lightning speed, his sometimes seething emotionality that found expression through wildly cascading solos, his physical prowess to play seemingly for hours without letup......and so forth. Even his most ardent critics seldom denied he was an outstanding musician. His supporters called him an artist and he was to a certain extent.

But In truth, the admiration was based more on his musicianship then his artistry, for art involves more then an ability to play a jazz solo that moves a certain number of listeners, mostly to excitement. Artistry simultaneously involves structure, forethought, revelation of self- essence, as well as a wide emotional range. These elements were not always present in Coltrane’s work in the past, as excellent as it was.

This record, however, is throughly a work of art.

It is, according to Coltrane, a statement of his rediscovery of God - the supreme love - and is meant as praise of the Almighty.

I do not know how Coltrane’s rediscovery has changed him as a man, but there is a change in his music - not a radical change, but one that has produced a peace not often heard in his playing previously, and Coltrane’s peace induces reflection in the listener. It takes the form of startlingly beautiful lyricism that sometimes hovers over his accompaniment, as on Psalm, a most moving performance. It is evident in the de-emphasis of the fury and frustration that had become such a part of Coltrane’s work during the last three years.

Musically, Coltrane is very much together on this record. The excesses of the past are conquered. Everything counts, nothing sprawls.

His use of thematically developed motifs is excellent, particularly on Acknowledgement (a four note, chantlike theme which Coltrane also sings - “a love supreme” - after his solo.) The melodicism that is such a striking characteristic of his playing on this album is more often chromatic than diatonic and, consequently, sometimes creates a bitonality that sets up a wonderful tension with Tyner’s chords and Garrison’s bass lines. Coltrane’s artistry is evident in his never permitting tension to overcome its counterpoise, release. His solo on Pursuance contrasts with his other solos because it is more in the rampaging devil-dance style he has used in the recent years; but within that soaring complexity he inserts touchstones of simplicity, which of course, is the same tension-release device he uses in a different way in the other solos.

Tyner and Jones are their usual excellent selves, and their work, both in solo and support, is of the nature and quality one expects from them. Garrison deserves special commendation for his playing on the record. His solo that bridges Pursuance and Psalm is a masterly piece of work. In it he makes subtle use of the four-note Acknowledgement theme (which I assume is the four part work’s main theme), uses tempo for effect rather then point of reference, and brings off beautifully a series of structured chords and single-note lines thats eventually leads into Psalm.

This is a significant album, because Coltrane has brought together the promising but underdeveloped aspects of his previous work; has shorn, compressed, extended, and tamed them; and has emerged a greater artist for it. (D.DeM.)

 -You have heard the track "Resolution" from this album in your audio tracks. This review is also written at the time of the albums release (1965), and is a little more lengthy than the Kind of Blue review. It also contains more commentary about the reviewers “professional” opinions on Coltrane’s past music, his reputation and spends time rating/judging the “worthiness” of the music. Most of this is in the first few paragraphs, you can read it and take it in, but because you are not rating or judging the worthiness of the music, it will not really apply to **your review**. What you SHOULD use as a examples of music review style writing are the descriptions of the music and performance found in the final 3 paragraphs of this review. The reviewer may have a more in depth understanding of musical events and terms than you at this point, but this is a good example of using musical descriptions to describe the music. Phrases such as ”uses tempo for effect”, and “ a series of strummed chords and single-note lines” help the reader to “hear” the music. This review is also a good example of the use of descriptive terms which help bring the music to life on paper, such as: ”chantlike”, or “rampaging devil-dance”.

Review:

***Jack Wilkins: The Blue & Green Project,*** Summitt Records – DCD 572

Personnel: Wilkins-tenor saxophone, Sara Caswell-violin, LaRue Nickelson-guitar, Corey Christiansen-guitar, Keith Oshiro-trombone, Tom Brantlye-trombone, Per Danielsson-piano, Jeff Pinkham-banjo, and others

***In JazzTimes***

***Published 01/06/2012    By Thomas Conrad***

Jack Wilkins’ project is a unique attempt to combine jazz with Appalachian mountain music. The two genres prove to be surprisingly complementary. The inspiration for the opening track, “Song of the Anvil,” is a field recording of two master blacksmiths in Spruce Pine, N.C., communicating in the “language of the anvil,” hammering together in tempo. The ringing syncopations become an authentic, commanding hard-bop anthem, with strong, clear solo stories from tenor saxophonist Wilkins, trombonist Keith Oshiro and guitarist Corey Christiansen.

Wilkins is the director of the jazz studies program at the University of South Florida in Tampa. His compositions and arrangements for up to 18 musicians reflect an academic’s meticulousness and thoroughness. The intricate 14-minute suite “Mountain Watercolors,” inspired by the paintings of North Carolina artist Elizabeth Ellison, contains three movements, each connected to an element of Ellison’s art, each fully explained in Wilkins’ liner notes.

But Wilkins’ conscientious craftsmanship is neither tame nor dry. “Mountain Watercolors” includes a wild, whining guitar solo by LaRue Nickelson and a careening fiddle workout by Sara Caswell. Bluegrass grooves and wailing hoedowns keep popping up in Wilkins’ through-composed designs. The most memorable piece is the short, harrowing “Death Rattle,” based on “death ballads” found in mountain cultures. Christiansen, Nickelson, Wilkins and trombonist Tom Brantley all testify, darkly. Life in Appalachia was not always a party.

-This review is a modern review of a CD by your Professor.  You have one of the tracks (Mountain Watercolors) from this CD as part of your music tracks.  This is a good example of the reviewer using descriptive terms to bring the music to life for the reader.  Such phrases as : "wild, whining guitar solo" ,  "wailing hoedowns" and  "short, harrowing “Death Rattle,” help describe the music and his conclusion: "Life in Appalachia was not always a party." is a creative way to end his review, bringing the music and concept of the project together.

You should refer to these reviews when writing your own review for the Jazz Review Assignments.  Be sure you read the assignments carefully and include the required elements in your review.  You will submit a first draft and then have the opportunity to rewrite the final paper after the draft has been reviewed and returned to you. These are 2 separate assignments/submissions in your Weekly Modules, each with a due date that must be met.