

Live Jazz

There's no substitute for the excitement and intimacy of live jazz, especially in a small club. Santa Cruz is lucky to have one very good one, **Kuumbwa**. It's a quality operation, run by a non-profit organization, and booked by some of the same team that promotes the Monterey Jazz Festival. Check out their schedule on the internet. It's worth joining this organization for discounts on tickets, no-charge reservations, and a newsletter listing upcoming performances. Kuumbwa serves beer, wine, and several nice modest-sized dinners, all at moderate cost.

For more than 50 years, Pete Douglas's beach house just north of Half Moon Bay has been home to an eclectic variety of concerts, many of them mainstream jazz, most on Sunday afternoons, under the imprimatur of another non-profit, the **Bach Dancing and Dynamite Society**. The setting is intimate, and performances are often sold out. Google for detailed information and a schedule of performances.

Yoshi's Music Clubs in San Francisco and Oakland feature on an irregular schedule live jazz several nights a month. Both venues offer a high quality musical experience. The Oakland club is a bit easier to access from Santa Cruz, and with easy parking. Google for detailed information and schedules. At both locations the food is very good but not cheap.

San Jose Jazz provides music listings for performances and sessions in the South Bay area, and sponsors a weekend music festival (in August) that features some jazz. The **Stanford Jazz Workshop** presents top musicians several nights a week each summer from late June to mid-August. **SFJazz** presents a broad variety of jazz artists in venues all over San Francisco throughout the year. A two-weekend festival in Healdsburg each year also presents major jazz artists in pleasant venues. The music department at **Cabrillo College** has a first rate jazz program, with a decent big band led by trumpeter, composer, arranger, and educator Ray Brown, a veteran of the Kenton band. Google to find the websites of each of these organizations for details and schedules.

Visiting a Jazz Club One of the first questions a newcomer always asks is, “what's a set,” and “should I attend the first set or the second set” (or the third set, if there is one). Most jazz events are broken into two or more parts, each of which is called a set. Depending on the artist and the venue, a set typically lasts 45-75 minutes, with a break of 30-45 minutes between sets. Most venues charge admission, often called a “cover charge,” and if they serve drinks or food, will usually require a minimum purchase per set. You may pay admission at the door, or receive a check at the end of the set (or the end of the evening). Occasionally, musicians may opt to play one longer set of music (typically 90 minutes or more), usually so that they can leave the venue earlier to facilitate travel to the next city.

Most seasoned jazz listeners (and most musicians going to hear other musicians) prefer the later sets, because the performers tend to be settled into a groove and swinging harder as the evening wears on. In today's jazz climate, jazz clubs are often not full, especially for later sets, and most clubs will allow (and may even encourage) those who come for the first set to stay for later sets at no charge, or by paying an additional minimum. It's far better for business and the musicians to have people in the seats, even if they haven't paid a second cover charge. Some more expensive clubs booking more expensive artists may charge both a cover and a minimum for each set, but this is rare except in New York City.

I generally prefer to start with the first set and stay throughout the evening if I'm enjoying the music. At Kuumbwa, those who attend the first set are almost always invited to stay for the second set at no additional charge.

Live jazz is not background music. Treat musicians (and the rest of the audience) with the same respect

you would at the symphony. Turn off your cell phone, hold all conversation until intermissions. If you must communicate with a companion during the performance, whisper in his or her ear. Do the same when a wait-person comes to take your drink order. Few things are more distracting (or more selfish) than some turkey loudly running his or her mouth (and massaging his or her ego) that you can hear halfway across the room. It's OK to get up to use the facilities or get a drink, but make your move between tunes. If you must leave early to catch a train, do that between tunes too.

Most jazz audiences are in the habit of applauding each solo, almost to the extent of doing so mechanically for even the most mundane solo efforts. While it's not good to sit on your hands all night, I prefer to hold my applause for those I really enjoy. In general, it is bad form to applaud a solo during the performance of a *ballad* because it tends to break the mood the artist is trying to create. Rather, hold your applause until the end of the song. Lately, audiences have come to believe that they should give a standing ovation to even an ordinary performance at the end of the evening. Again, I prefer to hold my standing ovations for a really exceptional performance by a really great artist.