

Core Values of Jazz Formats

Summary Findings

- Mainstream jazz listeners value authenticity. They appreciate stations that play real jazz. The mainstream stations project integrity because they respect and preserve the true American musical art form.
- Mainstream jazz listeners appreciate historical context. They have a sense that jazz is an important part of the story of America. Several respondents compared jazz radio to the History Channel on cable.
- Mainstream jazz puts listeners into a retrospective state of mind. They think about the days when giants like Monk and Coltrane were in their prime. Many mainstream listeners learned to appreciate jazz in their formative years, often from older generations in their own family.
- Mainstream jazz listeners pay attention to the recordings played and the information given by announcers because they want to continue learning about the music. The station turns them on to artists they might hear in person or recordings they might purchase.
- Because their minds are actively engaged in the music, jazz listeners seldom use the mainstream jazz station just for background sound. Jazz listeners tend to be paying close attention to the intricacies of the music.
- In contrast to classical listeners who often describe their listening experience as soothing or stress-relief, mainstream jazz listeners describe uplifting feelings like joy, energy, motivation and inspiration.
- Mainstream jazz listeners value authoritative air personalities. They look up to jocks that know the music and can explain the significance of each recording. But too much talk—any talking beyond a tidbit of musical information—can cause a tune out.
- The commercial smooth jazz format is perceived as the opposite of mainstream jazz. One is real, while the other is fake. Mainstream jazz engages the mind and energizes the body. Smooth jazz is mindless and quickly becomes boring to mainstream listeners.