

Learn how to write an album review.

Before reading

Do the preparation task first. Then read the text and tips and do the exercises.

Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–h) with the vocabulary (1–8).

Vocabulary

1. catchy
2. a melody
3. bitterness
4. fast-paced
5. fundamental
6. chart-topping
7. to channel something
8. die-hard

Definitions

- a. moving quickly
- b. easy to like and remember
- c. a song or tune
- d. the feeling of being angry at the world
- e. to feel inspired by something, making you act or behave like it
- f. a basic part of life
- g. strongly or fanatically devoted
- h. selling the most copies of a song or album in a particular week

Reading text: A music review

Want a job as a music journalist? Here's your chance. We're looking for a new lead reviewer for Hot! Magazine but we're not interviewing for the job. Instead, write a review of your favourite album ever. We want to know why you love it and why you think everyone should listen to it. Convince us and you've got the job!

I'm certainly not alone with my choice of favourite album. In fact, Bruce Springsteen's *Born in the USA* has sold 30 million copies worldwide since its release in 1984. Nearly 30 years later, in 2013, Springsteen performed the complete album in concert to the delight of some of his many die-hard fans.

A fast-paced, foot-tapping rock album, *Born in the USA*'s lyrics nevertheless carry emotional weight. Behind the catchy rock melodies that drive these powerhouse classics are stories of the dark side of the American dream. Many tracks deal with the struggles of hard-working ordinary people and the bitterness and anger they feel as life doesn't bring them riches or glory. The song *Glory Days*, for example, is about people in a small town looking back at when they were young and had the world at their feet while *Downbound Train* tells the story of a young man whose life is ruined when he loses his job. It's not hard to imagine that the artist is

channelling real people he knew and the life he might have had if he hadn't become a star. The album will leave you in no doubt of the unique and extraordinary talent of the Boss.

Unlike many other best-selling album artists, Springsteen is still releasing chart-topping, stadium-filling new music and remains at the top of his game in his late 60s. It doesn't surprise me at all. This is a man who tells us our most fundamental stories about ourselves and, when you listen to *Born in the USA*, those stories are as relevant today as they ever were.

Tips

1. The first paragraph should be a general introduction to what you're reviewing. Include the title, artist, and an interesting fact about its success or how it was made.
2. The main body of the review needs detailed observations. Use specific vocabulary (e.g. *lyrics, fast-paced, catchy melodies*) to comment on particular songs and parts of the music.
3. It is also important to give context. Link the music to the artist's life, or what inspired them, and the political or social context of the album.
4. Try to make the review interesting and relevant to the reader. You can relate the artist's work to real-life experience (yours or that of people in general).
5. Use compound adjectives (e.g. *fast-paced, foot-tapping, best-selling*) to make your writing highly descriptive.
6. Finish off with a summary of why this album/concert, etc. is important.

Tasks

Task 1

Match the word halves to make compound adjectives and complete the sentences.

filling	ten	paced	selling
working	topping	tapping	hard

1. The album begins with an energetic, fast-..... song.
2. This chart-..... album went to number one in ten countries.
3. The album was the best-..... album that year.
4. The highlight of the album is the foot-..... final song.
5. The stadium-..... rock band released this album at the height of their fame.
6. This hard-..... band travelled all over the country, playing concerts almost every day.

7. The album was a commercial failure and was loved only by the band's die-..... fans.
8. Four songs on the album became top-..... hits.

Task 2

Put the words and phrases in order to make sentences.

1. rock album, emotional weight. A fast-paced, foot-tapping *Born in the USA's* nevertheless carry lyrics
2. stories of the dark side powerhouse classics the catchy rock melodies of the American dream. are Behind that drive these
3. whose life is ruined when he loses his job. people in a small town tells the story The song *Glory Days*, for looking back at when they were young of a young man while *Downbound Train* example, is about
4. that the artist hadn't become a star. real people he knew might have had It's not hard to imagine is channelling if he and the life he
5. best-selling album artists, chart-topping, stadium-filling new music in his late 60s. many other and remains Springsteen is still releasing at the top of his game Unlike
6. our most fundamental stories who tells us those stories are as relevant today and, when you listen to *Born in the USA*, as they ever were. about ourselves This is a man

Task 3

Complete the sentences with words from the box.

channelling	weight	chart-topping
Unlike	catchy	bitterness

1. The song didn't have the commercial success of her first single.
2. other artists, she can still fill stadiums.
3. It's clear the singer is memories of her youth.
4. The public dispute between the two artists has led to lasting on both sides.
5. The songs carry emotional
6. Advertising companies like using songs in adverts so they stay in your head.

Discussion

What's your favourite album of all time?

Answers

Preparation task

1. b
2. c
3. d
4. a
5. f
6. h
7. e
8. g

Task 1

1. paced
2. topping
3. selling
4. tapping
5. filling
6. working
7. hard
8. ten

Task 2

1. A fast-paced, foot-tapping rock album, *Born in the USA*'s lyrics nevertheless carry emotional weight.
2. Behind the catchy rock melodies that drive these powerhouse classics are stories of the dark side of the American dream.
3. The song *Glory Days*, for example, is about people in a small town looking back at when they were young while *Downbound Train* tells the story of a young man whose life is ruined when he loses his job.
4. It's not hard to imagine that the artist is channelling real people he knew and the life he might have had if he hadn't become a star.
5. Unlike many other best-selling album artists, Springsteen is still releasing chart-topping, stadium-filling new music and remains at the top of his game in his late 60s.
6. This is a man who tells us our most fundamental stories about ourselves and, when you listen to *Born in the USA*, those stories are as relevant today as they ever were.

Task 3

1. chart-topping
2. Unlike
3. channelling
4. bitterness
5. weight
6. catchy