

Wednesday, September 21, 2011, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

Herbie Hancock



Douglas Kirkland

Herbie Hancock *piano*
Vinnie Colaiuta *drums*
James Genus *bass*
Lionel Loueke *guitar*

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HERBIE HANCOCK is an icon of modern music. Through his musical explorations, he has transcended limitations and genres while maintaining his unmistakable voice. With an illustrious career spanning five decades and 12 Grammy Awards, including the 2007 Album of the Year for *River: The Joni Letters*, he continues to amaze audiences.

There are few musicians who have had a greater influence on jazz and R&B than Mr. Hancock. As Miles Davis said in his autobiography, “Herbie was the step after Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk, and I haven’t heard anybody yet who has come after him.”

Born in Chicago in 1940, Mr. Hancock was a child piano prodigy who performed a Mozart piano concerto with the Chicago Symphony at age 11. He began playing jazz in high school, initially influenced by Oscar Peterson and Bill Evans. He also developed a passion for electronics and science, and double-majored in music and electrical engineering at Grinnell College.

In 1963, Mr. Davis invited Mr. Hancock to join the Miles Davis Quintet. During his five years with Mr. Davis, Mr. Hancock and his colleagues Wayne Shorter (tenor saxophone), Ron Carter (bass) and Tony Williams (drums) recorded many classic recordings, including *ESP*, *Nefertiti* and *Sorcerer*. Later on, Mr. Hancock made appearances on Mr. Davis’s groundbreaking *In a Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew*, which heralded the birth of jazz fusion.

Mr. Hancock’s own solo career blossomed on Blue Note, on such classic albums as *Maiden Voyage*, *Empyrean Isles* and *Speak Like a Child*. He composed the score to Michelangelo Antonioni’s 1966 film *Blow-Up*, which led to a successful career in feature film and television scoring.

After leaving Davis, Mr. Hancock put together a new band called the Headhunters and, in 1973, recorded *Head Hunters*. With its cross-over hit single “Chameleon,” it became the first jazz album to go platinum.

By mid-decade, Mr. Hancock was playing for stadium-size crowds all over the world and had no fewer than four albums in the pop charts at once. In total, Mr. Hancock had 11 albums in the pop charts during the 1970s. His 1970s

output inspired and provided samples for generations of hip-hop and dance-music artists.

Mr. Hancock also stayed close to his love of acoustic jazz in the 1970s, recording and performing with VSOP (reuniting him with his Miles Davis Quintet colleagues) and in duet settings with Chick Corea and Oscar Peterson.

In 1980, Mr. Hancock introduced the trumpeter Wynton Marsalis to the world as a solo artist, producing his debut album and touring with him as well. In 1983, a new pull to the alternative side led Mr. Hancock to a series of collaborations with Bill Laswell. The first, *Future Shock*, again struck platinum, and the single “Rockit” rocked the dance and R&B charts, winning a Grammy Award for Best R&B Instrumental. The video of the track won five MTV awards. *Sound System*, the follow-up, also received a Grammy Award in the R&B instrumental category.

Mr. Hancock won an Oscar in 1986 for his score of the film *Round Midnight*, in which he also appeared as an actor. Numerous television appearances over the years led to two hosting assignments in the 1980s: *Rock School* on PBS and Showtime’s *Coast to Coast*.

After an adventurous 1994 project for Mercury Records, *Dis Is Da Drum*, he moved to the Verve label, forming an all-star band to record 1996’s Grammy Award-winning *The New Standard*. In 1997, an album of duets with Wayne Shorter, *I+I*, was released.

The legendary Headhunters reunited in 1998, recording an album for Mr. Hancock’s own Verve-distributed imprint and touring with the Dave Matthews Band. That year also marked the recording and release of *Gershwin’s World*, which included collaborators Joni Mitchell, Stevie Wonder, Kathleen Battle, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Wayne Shorter and Chick Corea. *Gershwin’s World* won three Grammy Awards in 1999, including Best Traditional Jazz Album and Best R&B Vocal Performance for Stevie Wonder’s “St. Louis Blues.”

Mr. Hancock reunited with Mr. Laswell to collaborate with some young hip-hop and techno artists on 2001’s *Future2Future*. He also joined with Roy Hargrove and Michael Brecker in 2002 to record a live concert album,

Directions in Music: Live at Massey Hall, a tribute to John Coltrane and Miles Davis.

Possibilities, released in August 2005, teamed Mr. Hancock with many popular artists, such as Sting, Annie Lennox, John Mayer, Christina Aguilera, Paul Simon, Carlos Santana, Joss Stone and Damien Rice. That year, he played a number of concert dates with a re-staffed Headhunters, and became the first Artist in Residence at the Tennessee-based festival, Bonnaroo.

In 2007, Mr. Hancock recorded and released *River: The Joni Letters*, a tribute to longtime friend and collaborator Joni Mitchell, featuring Wayne Shorter, guitarist Lionel Loueke, bassist Dave Holland and drummer Vinnie Colaiuta and co-produced by Larry Klein. He enlisted vocalists Norah Jones, Tina Turner, Corinne Bailey Rae, Luciana Souza, Leonard Cohen and Ms. Mitchell herself to perform songs she wrote or was inspired by. The album received glowing reviews and was a year-end top-ten choice for many critics. It also garnered three Grammy Award nominations and two wins for Best Contemporary Jazz Album and Album of the Year. This marked only the second time in history a jazz album has won music’s highest honor with the last taking place almost 50 years prior.

To cap off his illustrious career to date, Verve records released *Then and Now: The Definitive Mr. Hancock* in 2008. This essential collection is the first career retrospective of the jazz visionary’s unparalleled work.

Mr. Hancock also maintains a thriving career outside the performing stage and recording studio. He is the Creative Chair for Jazz for the Los Angeles Philharmonic Association and serves as Institute Chairman of the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, the foremost international organization devoted to the development of jazz performance and education worldwide. He is also a founder of the International Committee of Artists for Peace.

Now in the fifth decade of his professional life, Mr. Hancock remains where he has always been: in the forefront of world culture, technology, business and music. Though one cannot track exactly where he will go next, he is sure to leave his inimitable imprint wherever he lands.