

# Jazz pianist Hancock digs electronics

By JIM WINDELL

## Review

While most other jazz pianists have retreated home to the acoustic piano, Herbie Hancock continues to delve deeper into the use of electronics as a source of energy and inspiration.

Friday night on a stage crammed with the 1970s hardware of jazz, Herbie Hancock and a sextet had both high energy and inspiration, performing at the Royal Oak Music Theater.

The imagination of Hancock and the rapport between him and his supporting musicians were only part of the reason that this funk 'n' jazz show was one of the most exciting concerts in the area in some time.

Even the warmup act was outstanding. Perhaps no one in the audience, for what appeared to be a sell-out concert, had ever heard of Sarah Dash before she appeared on stage for a 50-minute performance. Because of her sensuous song stylings and headliner quality poise, there will be few in that audience who will forget her.

SHE WAS ONE of the three members of Labelle, and she said this was only her third appearance as a single performer since leaving the female vocal group. It didn't show as she combined her striking beauty with a coyly

teasing style that seemed wrapped up in the title of one of her songs, "Come and Take This Candy from Your Baby." The men in the crowd found her fetching.

Dressed in his usual double-breasted blue blazer, Hancock began his portion of the show with what was to be a lyrical and somewhat somber piece. The melodic prelude was seriously disrupted by a 20-foot aluminum ladder that crashed down from high above the stage just behind Hancock and in the middle of the drums and amplifiers.

Hancock continued unperturbed, but the audience was not with him. He was soon joined by drummer Alphonse Mouzon (who would have been dispatched to meet his Maker had he been on stage five minutes earlier) and bassist Paul Jackson for a modern version of Hancock's composition "Maiden Voyage."

Following the treatment of that famous Hancock song, the other members of the touring group were introduced to bring to the music exciting rhythms and high voltage volume.

Herbie Hancock was the piano player in the Miles Davis combos of the pe-

riod between 1963 and 1968. It was Davis who persuaded him to try the electric keyboard and with the famous trumpeter they developed a form of rock-jazz fusion music that has changed jazz.

After leaving Miles Davis, Hancock continued to compose and explore music forms using rock and funk rhythms. By 1974 when his "Headhunters" album became one of the biggest selling LPs by a jazz artist, Hancock had innovated a fusion direction that helped to involve younger and relatively non-jazz audiences in jazz-rock music.

BENNIE MAUPIN, on tenor and other reed instruments, along with Hancock provide most of the jazz. Maupin on tenor can be soulful as well as tough. In the finale, a real rocker, Maupin and Hancock, who was playing a portable Prophet keyboard, squared off in an improvisational duel as they traded four bar solos that fit in well with the contemporary sound and the heavy percussive beat.

"You Bet Your Love" and "Ready or Not," both from Hancock's latest Columbia LP "Feels Don't Fail Me Now," were nicely expanded and enjoyable versions giving more pleasure than those same numbers on the record.

Mouzon's unique drum style with the insistent snare beats and his funky vocal style were highlights of "Ready or Not."

Hancock was wired up with a microphone connected to his Senheiser Vocoder for "You Bet Your Love." While this gives an unusual space-age sound to his singing, it was his Fener Rhodes keyboard solo featuring sparkling notes and glittering runs that flew from the stage like so many sparks that made this an extraordinary number.

His Vocoder was put to good use in "I Thought It Was You." He said modestly while introducing the song that it was the electronic synthesizing ability of that instrument which allowed a keyboard player to be a singer. Actually, his vocal is perfectly realized and enough of his own voice comes through to show that he need not be ashamed of his ability to phrase and shape the lyrics.

THE HUMOR, which some jazz-rock groups lack, was displayed on "I Thought It Was You" also. While Hancock and the second keyboard player, Webster Lewis, were dueting, the other five musicians gathered arm-in-arm downstage to do some "Shoo-ah" background voicings in a 1950-ish fashion. Hancock's experimentation with per-



HERBIE HANCOCK

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cussion and electronic effects while bringing about a greater audience for jazz in general has not been without its critics. Some people have said that he is not playing jazz and others that he has watered down the jazz to make more money.

Hancock asserts that this is not true at all. He thinks that his music should not be judged by old standards and that it be considered on its merits. "The major consideration," he has been quoted as saying, "is that I like what I'm playing." He says he discovered his brand of funky fusion music by listening to James Brown and Sly Stone. He also says that he really likes what he is playing these days.

The audience of 1,000 persons was in complete agreement. They also liked what he plays.

## 'Scat' whistle-stops at Eastover School

Scat McNizzy is into the goppy cake today at the Hickory Grove Elementary School.

The children's musical will be presented at 10 a.m. for the students of Hickory Grove, where "Scat" has been in residence for the last five weeks. In the afternoon, "Scat" whistle-stops at Eastover Elementary School for a 1:30 p.m. show.

"Scat" already has been in residence at the Conant Elementary School and the Booth Elementary School. After Hickory Grove, "Scat" moves to the Vaughan Elementary School for five weeks, to produce "Scat" and whistle-

stop the musical to Fox Hills and Traub Elementary Schools.

This musical is about a boy named Scat who discovers the need for respect. It revolves around his family, the McNizzys, and illustrates through song, dance and action how Scat's lack of respect for others affects everyone, including himself.

"SCAT" is written, directed and produced by Taffy Jones, originator of the Whistle-Stop Children's Theater. Other directors of the Whistle-Stop Theater who make up the artists-in-residence group in the Bloomfield Hills School

District, with an art-in-education grant from the Michigan Council for the Arts, are Brenda McDonald, lyricist, song writer and musical director; Sheila Devlin, musical arranger and accompanist; and Betty Appleton, dance choreographer.

The cast for "Scat" at Hickory Grove is: Scat, Tim Owens; Mom McNizzy, Amy both on Channel 2.

The cast for "Scat" at Hickory Grove is: Scat, Tim Owens; Mom McNizzy, Amy Bialoch; Dad McNizzy, Tim Radak; Tizzy McNizzy, Holly McCann; Candy McNizzy, Regina Campbell; Grandma McNizzy, Candy Gronski; Racket, their pet bird, Eric Zack; Rock the Great, Ross Myers; Dr. Getwell, Marc Zack; and Stage Manager, Chris Hazellen.

## St. Patrick's show offered

Pat McDunn, formerly billed as Father McDunn, will present a St. Patrick's week show from Monday-Friday, March 12-16, in Hurley's, located in Northfield Hillon Inn, Crooks Road at I-75, Troy.

Pat McDunn and the Gaels will present a varied repertoire featuring most-

ly Irish folk songs. From Monday through Friday the group will perform 5-8 p.m. and are immediately followed by Wild Wind musical group.

McDunn is the leader who sings and plays tambourine, accompanied by accordion player Chris Buryta, guitarists Dennis Manderfield and Dennis Panaras.

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