

Fusion and Music in the 1970's

Fusion- A term which came to be substituted for Jazz-Rock from the mid-1970's and which has applied predominantly to that style. It is important to note that fused styles is nothing new to Jazz music, for this idea also applies to the synthesis of Jazz and Soul, Jazz and Funk, Jazz and light music, and Jazz with various forms of Folk music's.

Characteristics of Fusion or Jazz-Rock Styles:

1) Replacement of the standard 4/4 swing with with Rock and Funk Rhythms. (Back-Beat rhythms)

Drummers played much more in the middle of the set and required larger sets to produce the sound needed for the ensemble.

2) The Bass generally played more ostinato rhythms, which slowed the harmonic rhythm in much of the music.

3) Electronic instruments are now the norm. (Electric Bass, Synthesizers and Electronic Keyboards, Electronic Guitar)

4) Much more volume and the need for more intense amplification.

5) More effects were now being used.

6) Saxophone still a predominant sound.

7) The harmonic structure is the least important of the big three(melody, harmony and rhythm).

8) Music for the populace not the artisans. Music was for entertainment value.

9) Many times music was also for dance.

10) This movement coexisted with the Corporate interest in popular music. It also was a time in which many Black musicians were finally being rewarded with contracts that paid them fairly in the popular market. Jazz musicians saw an advantage to capitalize on R&B, Funk and Motown (and others) success by creating music that could give them financial rewards.

11) This was also a natural style that fit those who attained to play Electric Guitar and Electric Keyboards. There was a whole new generation of young musicians who were inspired by the music of the 60's and musicians like Jimi Hendrix. Thus new Jazz styles were born.

Key Fusion Musicians and Bands:

Miles Davis

He was a catalyst in this whole movement. Please see important information under his bio. section.

Weather Report

Founded in 1970, consisted of original members Joe Zawinul on keyboards, Wayne Shorter on soprano and Tenor saxophones, Mirslov Vitous- Bass, Alphonse Mouzon- drums, and Airto Moreira- additional percussion.

This group occurred many personnel changes with Zawinul and Shorter (until 1985) being mainstays.

Important Facts about Weather Report:

- 1) One of the first popular Jazz-Rock groups to attain popularity among artisans and populace.
- 2) Highly improvisational group which did not always perform music with traditional roles in mind. Unique approach to group improvisation, as seen with the recordings of *Seventh Arrow* and *Umbrellas* (1971).
- 3) Zawinul had vision to creating a more rock-based group. In his pursuit of commercial success he scored big with "Birdland" (1976) and "Havona" (1976). "Havona" features the talents of electric-bass legend Jaco Pastorius.
- 4) Zawinul based a lot of his music in dance rhythms and featured a band with many complex electronic effects.

Mahavishnu Orchestra

**Fusion Group formed by British guitarist John McLaughlin.

** Mahavishnu was the spiritual name given McLaughlin by his guru.

** The original members included Billy Cobham on drums, Jan Hammer on Keyboards, Rick Laird (electric bass), and Jerry Goodman on Violin.

Musical Characteristics:

- 1) Biting electric sound with sustained high volume.
- 2) Dance rhythms of R&Roll.
- 3) Complex improvisation with mixed meters.
- 4) Mantra-like ostinatos borrowed from Indian religious traditions.
- 5) 11 piece group was formed later featuring Jean-Luc Ponty on violin. Later broke over financial matters. Group later formed with the quartet of Cobham, Bill Evans on Tenor Sax, and Danny Gottlieb.

The Headhunters

** Formed by Herbie Hancock, composer, performer, produce and arranger.

-Hancock established himself as one of the premier pianists in the world when working with the Miles Davis Quintet between 1963-8. Miles recorded *Miles in the Sky* which introduced Hancock to the Fender Rhodes electric piano.

-After leaving Miles he continued to use the Fender Rhodes and made 3 albums that were not terribly successful. (*Crossings*, *Mwnadishi*, *Sextant*)

-In 1973, Hancock recorded a landmark album entitled *Headhunters*. This was one of the most successful Fusion albums of all-time.

Important items of Headhunters:

1) Inspired by R&B acts Sly and the Family Stone, the Pointer Sisters (whom he opened for in SF) and James Brown, *Headhunters* is a Funk-Rock-Jazz fused album.

2) This recording reached #13 on the Billboard charts. This music had much commercial appeal.

3) Instead of hiring Jazz musicians who could play Funk, Hancock hired Funk musicians who could improvise and play Jazz. It gave this recording the right 'feel'.

4) "Chameleon" was the enormously successful hit from this album. Hancock standardized the role of the synthesizer from this recording.

- Hancock's biggest success in the fusion idiom came with "Rockit" from the 1983 album *Future Shock*. This tune stayed on the pop charts for over a year and became a MTV classic video.

Return to Forever

** Jazz-Rock-Latin group formed in by pianist-keyboardist Chick Corea.

-Between 1971-73, Corea forms one of the landmark Fusion groups of all-time, *Return to Forever*. By the mid-70's, Corea had become very popular with Rock audiences. His band used extensive electronic keyboards including the Fender Rhodes piano. Some of his most influential compositions have come from this period ("Spain", "Windows" and "Crystal Silence").

-*Return to Forever*, incorporated many aspects of musical genre including Brass Quintets, Latin influences, Rock, Spanish and classical music.

Original Group members:

Joe Farrell, Reeds; Stanley Clarke, Bass; Flora Plurim, Voice; Airto Moreira, percussion;

-In 1972-4 Return to Forever had three significant recordings:

Light as a Feather ('72), *Return to Forever* ('73), *Where Have I Known You Before* ('74)

-In 1975, group begins losing it's vitality, yet record their most popular recording, *Romantic Warrior*.

-Corea later forms a 13 piece ensemble of Return to Forever, this group made use of a chamber orchestra and multi-electronics. The approach of third stream and light pop was not commercially successful.

The Jazz Crusaders

**Formed by Joe Sample and Stix Hooper while HS students in Houston.

-They began as a Hard-Bop-Soul Jazz group.

-Original Members, Wilton Felder Saxes, Joe Sample Keyboards, Stix Hooper Drums, Wayne Henderson Trombone, Henry Wilson Bass, and Hubert Laws Flute.

-As they got older, Sample and Hooper began doing a lot of Studio work and Henderson became active as a studio producer.

-Ceased touring and began recording in 1971.

-Added Larry Carlton on Guitar.

-In 1979 *Street Life* became a huge hit.

-Group was together until the mid-1980's.

Grover Washington

Saxophonist, Composer

-Broke in big with Charles Earland, Organist in the Philadelphia area.

-This led to a contract with the Prestige Label in 1970-1.

-First substantial recording was *Inner City Blues*, in 1971.. considered his debut. (Was supposed to make debut with tenor saxophonist Hank Crawford, but failed to show for the session)

-Began a very successful touring career.

-In 1975, he recorded *Mr. Magic*, which hit #1 on several pop charts.

-First of several Gold and Platinum albums.

-Blended Jazz and Soul music very successfully.