



HERBIE HANCOCK

Carolyn and Bill Powers Creative Chair for Jazz

Herbie Hancock is a true icon of modern music. Throughout his explorations, he has transcended limitations and genres while maintaining his unmistakable voice. With an illustrious career spanning five decades and 12 Grammys, including the 2007 Album of the Year for *River: The Joni Letters*, he continues to amaze audiences.

There are few artists in the music industry who have had more influence on acoustic and electronic jazz and R&B than Herbie Hancock. As the immortal 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, Herbie was a child prodigy who performed a Mozart piano concerto with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra 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 1960, Herbie was discovered by trumpeter Donald Byrd. After two years of session work with Byrd as well as Phil Woods and Oliver Nelson, he signed with Blue Note as a solo artist. His 1963 debut album, *Takin' Off*, was an immediate success, producing the hit "Watermelon Man." In 1963, Miles Davis invited Herbie to join the Miles Davis Quintet. During his five years with Davis, Herbie and his colleagues Wayne Shorter (tenor sax), Ron Carter (bass), and Tony Williams (drums) recorded many classics, including *ESP*, *Nefertiti*, and *Sorcerer*. Later on, Herbie made appearances on Davis' groundbreaking *In a Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew*, which heralded the birth of jazz fusion.

Herbie's own solo career blossomed on Blue Note, with classic albums including *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 music.

After leaving Davis, Herbie put together a new band called The Headhunters and, in 1973, recorded *Head Hunters*. With its crossover hit single "Chameleon," it became the first jazz album to go platinum.

In 1980, Herbie 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 Herbie 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 for Best R&B Instrumental. The video of the track won five MTV awards. *Sound System*, the follow-up, also received a Grammy in the R&B instrumental category.

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-winning *The New Standard*. In 1997, an album of duets with Wayne Shorter, *1+1*, was released.

The legendary Headhunters reunited in 1998, recording an album for Herbie'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 Grammys in 1999, including Best Traditional Jazz Album and Best R&B Vocal Performance for Stevie Wonder's "St. Louis Blues."

Possibilities, released in August 2005, teamed Herbie 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-ever Artist-In-Residence at the Tennessee-based festival Bonnaroo.

In 2007, Hancock recorded and released *River: The Joni Letters*, a tribute to longtime friend and collaborator Joni Mitchell. The album received glowing reviews and was a year-end Top-10 choice for many critics. It

also garnered three Grammy nominations, and two wins, for Best Contemporary Jazz Album and Album of the Year. To cap off his illustrious career to date, Verve records released *Then and Now: The Definitive Herbie Hancock* in 2008.

Herbie Hancock also maintains a thriving career outside the performing stage and recording studio. He 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. He succeeds Christian McBride as the Carolyn and Bill Powers Creative Chair for Jazz for the Los Angeles Philharmonic Association.

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