U.S. Shares Jazz With Asia

Hancock Among Top Acts On Tour

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Although he has a new album, "The New Standard," due out on Verve Tuesday (19), ace and winning jazz pianist Herbie Hancock isn't on the promotional circuit right now.

Instead, he's in Asia, where he is taking part in a 9-week concert and workshop tour of India and Thailand with seven students from the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz. This is sponsored by the U.S. Information Agency.

Hancock will lead the students in a series of workshops, master classes, and concerts in the Indian cities of Bombay, Calcutta, Madura and New Delhi through Wednesday (20).

From Wednesday 25th through Saturday (23), he will be in Bangkok, Thailand, by invitation/Thelonious Monk Jr. and former Taoist Sherron Shorter for the remainder of the government-sponsored tour.

Hancock's part in the tour took a frightening turn during his second day in India, when he fell off a 12-foot platform during a publicity photo session while the group was visiting the Taj Mahal in Agra March 9th.

As a result of the fall, the pianist badly cut his third finger, was given a trip to the hospital and 19 stitches.

Hancock was only a little worse for the wear, said manager David Parkinson of David Hancock Entertainment.

"He went on with the kids itinerary. The India/Thailand tour is the second USA/International tour with the Monk Institute. In 1990, the Institute's Jazz Ambassadors died by Monk's performance and shared the jazz experience with enthusiastic students and music lovers throughout eastern and southern Africa.

The tour underlines the USA's long-standing efforts to spread American jazz around the world, which began more than 20 years ago with the now legendary jazz radio program hosted by William Claxton on the overseas Voice of America broadcasts. The tour is part of the USA's Arts America program, which has also sponsored tours with such jazz artists as Dizzy Gillespie, Terence Blanchard, and Don Pullen, as well as with various artists and groups.

Voice of America has also organized live concerts featuring artists as varied as Garth Brooks, Dave Grusin, Washington Jr., and Chet Atkins for broadcast in other countries (Billboard, July 4, 1992).

Hancock's visits follow the pioneering "Jazz Ambassadors" State Department tours in the '60s by the late Louis Armstrong, Gillespie, Dizzy, and others, which, along with Coltrane's program, first branded international interest in the American art form.

Joining Hancock and the jazz stars for the multination tour are Institute student Daren Barnett, trumpet; Iggy Dione, saxophone; Oler Green, guitar; Sanford Haynes, trombone; Kecia Kunraveshaw, bass; Holm Hing, piano; and Steve Thomas on drums, along with Philadelphia-born Carl Atkins.

The Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz Performance is located at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston. The man Monk Institute of Jazz Studies is located here.)

Hancock will receive his promotion of "The New Standard" after the tour, according to Verve executives. The new album is being heralded as an update of the depersonalized tradition of jazz music interpretations of earlier standards.

Instead of focusing on evergreen of the '50s through the '60s, Hancock and his group interpret songs by Bing, Nat King Cole, Peter Gabriel, Stevie Wonder, and other latter-day hit makers that have achieved the status of new "standards."