

Billboard

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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), award-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 2 1/2-week concert and workshop tour of India and Thailand with seven students from the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz Performance, 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 Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, and New Delhi through Wednesday (20).

From Wednesday (20) through Saturday (23), he will be joined in Bangkok, Thailand, by drummer Thelonious Monk Jr. and tenor sax giant Wayne 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 9.

As a result of the fall, the pianist badly cut his head above his right eye and required a trip to the hospital and 16 stitches.

Hancock was only a little worse for the wear, said manager David Passick of David Passick Entertainment. "He went on with the day's itinerary."

The India/Thailand tour is the second USIA collaboration with the Monk Institute. In 1995, the Institute's Jazz Ambassadors (led by Monk) performed and shared the jazz experience



with enthusiastic students and musicians throughout eastern and southern Africa.

The tour underscores USIA's long-standing efforts to spread American jazz around the world, which began more than 35 years ago with the now-legendary jazz radio program hosted by Willis Conover on its overseas Voice of America broadcasts.

The tour is part of USIA'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 rockabilly artist Jeff Little and acoustic-music master Béla Fleck, among others.

Voice of America has also organized live concerts featuring artists as varied as Garth Brooks, Grover 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 '50s and '60s with Louis Armstrong, Gillespie, Dave Brubeck, and others, which, along with Conover's program, first kindled

international interest in the American art form.

Joining Hancock and the jazz stars for the multination tour are Institute students Darren Barrett, trumpet; Ignatz Dinne, saxophone; Ofir Canor, guitar; Jamal Haynes, trombone; Keala Kaumeheua, bass; Helen Sang, piano; and Sean Thomas on drums, along with PD/saxophonist Carl J. Atkins.

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

Hancock will resume his promotion of "The New Standard" after the tour, according to Verve executives. The new album is being heralded as an update of the decades-old tradition of jazz-album interpretations of older standards.

Instead of focusing on evergreens of the '20s through the '50s, Hancock and his group interpret songs by Sting, Sade, Don Henley, Peter Gabriel, Stevie Wonder, and other latter-day hit makers that have achieved the status of new "standards." BILL HOLLAND