



Jazz in America

Fusion

I. Fusion

- A. Fusion was at the forefront of jazz and went through its most concentrated growth and development from 1969–1990.*
- B. Fusion is the blending of jazz and rock (hence, the term “fusion,” as in “fusing” together the musical elements of jazz and rock).
 1. From jazz, Fusion got its sophistication and complexity: sophisticated improvisations and complex interplay among the musicians.
 2. From rock, Fusion got its power, rhythm, and simplicity: electronic instruments (i.e., electric guitars, basses, and keyboard synthesizers), rock rhythms (i.e., straight – not swung – eighth notes), and often simple harmony (i.e., sometimes just long one- or two-chord vamps).
- C. Fusion, at least in part, came about because jazz musicians wanted to capitalize on the popular appeal of rock music.
 1. To a degree, it worked. Many rock fans who were not into “regular” jazz did support Fusion artists (buying records and attending concerts).
 2. It was more likely for rock fans to support Fusion than jazz fans.
 3. Many jazz musicians and fans did not consider Fusion to be “real” jazz.
 4. But if you approach Fusion without any preconceived notions of what jazz is “supposed” to be, you will most likely find it very artistic and able to express emotions that “straight ahead” jazz does not.
- D. As he was with all style of jazz since Bebop, **Miles Davis** was at the forefront of the Fusion movement; the first fully formed Fusion album in jazz history is his “In a Silent Way.”
- E. Other important Fusion artists include:
 1. **Weather Report**
 2. **Chick Corea** (keyboards)
 3. **Herbie Hancock** (keyboards)
 4. **The Yellowjackets**

II. Conversation with Herbie Hancock – **AWESOME!**

* All styles of jazz from Early Jazz to contemporary are still being performed and recorded today. The style dates given are approximations of when each respective style came to the forefront of jazz and experienced its most concentrated development; of course, styles and dates overlap.