

1970s: Fusion Jazz



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Chapter 10

- Fusion covers a wide variety of approaches to post-1960s jazz. It combines jazz with the sounds of rock and funk music (non-jazz) from the 1960s and other sources. This may include the Motown sound, James Brown rhythm section style, the Beatles, psychedelic rock to folk rock, and the Afro-Cuban Latin style.
- The mid-1960s brought about a revolution in popular music with the British invasion of 1964. The invasion was the Beatles and a number of other British pop-rock bands that gained widespread popularity the following year.
- This was important to the jazz scene because record companies saw the potential for quick money in rock music versus jazz. The public's taste in music had been moving away from the sound of jazz for at least a decade. This left many jazz musicians and their record companies in a quandary.
- Free jazz, although exciting, groundbreaking, and abstract, did not approach near the popularity of cool or hard bop. In fact, it alienated many audiences. Even the biggest names in jazz were having difficulty filling venues, while rock acts were filling baseball stadiums.
- Nightclubs that formerly featured jazz were closing or were featuring rock or Motown-style acts. Many jazz musicians found employment working for these artists.
- Acoustic jazz and its accoutrements seemed old and dated to teenagers in the 1960s. The strongly visual aspect of rock music is important to the audience, and most jazz musicians were unable or unwilling to move in that direction.
- Many jazz musicians were not willing to address pop music, and they ran the risk of being forgotten. That is not to say that well-established jazz groups/artists did not release outstanding recordings during this period. Other jazz musicians chose to move to Europe to find employment there.
- Several British bands from the mid-1960s began fusing elements of modal jazz, rock, and blues. Some of them achieved a huge success, such as the Cream, the Graham Bond Organization, John Mayall's Blues Breakers, Soft Machine, Jethro Tull, King Crimson, and Emerson Lake and Palmer. Two important British musicians from this period who would make a lasting impression were guitarist John McLaughlin and bassist Dave Holland.
- Some jazz musicians continued to play as if it were still the 1950s, but others were receptive to the new sounds on the radio. Motown, the Beatles, Sly Stone, Jimi Hendrix, and the psychedelic sound of the late 1960s had an effect on jazz musicians.
- Black R&B music of the 1950s, the basis of rock and roll, took a different turn in the 1960s. R&B often contained more complicated rhythms than rock. Out of this genre came the intricate bass and drum patterns that were the trademark of artists like James Brown and other famous Motown groups. The Motown sound of the 1960s draws heavily from this approach; most of the session musicians on these recordings were jazz musicians. Very few of the big-name Motown artists played instruments.
- Much of the early jazz-rock sound centered on slow moving or modal harmony. This shows the jazz influence of:

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- Miles Davis's *Kind of Blue* (modal improvisation)
- John Coltrane's modal-based improvisations
- Indian music
- Ornette Coleman's free jazz approach
- The emergence of a new style of rhythm section playing that moved away from swing eighth notes and ride rhythms to the feel of rock (even eighth notes) or R&B rhythms altered the style of improvisation. Some of it was still chord based, but the bop cliches of the 1950s were no longer appropriate. With some improvisers, technique became as important as substance.
- Keyboard players' comping styles changed. They began to use the new electronic instruments such as electric pianos or synthesizers to create new sounds, colors, and textures. Bassists used more repetitive staccato figures. Drummers utilized more Latin flavors, played more actively, moved away from traditional swing rhythms, and used fewer cymbals and more drums.
- John Coltrane, Freddie Hubbard, Chick Corea, McCoy Tyner, and Herbie Hancock continued to be role models for the new generation of improvisers. Coltrane, in particular, was the inspiration for many rock guitarists of the 1960s and early 1970s.
- A few jazz musicians utilized the new rock-influenced sounds: Miles Davis, Gary Burton, Larry Coryell, Herbie Mann, Herbie Hancock, Tony Williams, and Joe Zawinul were among the best-known jazz musicians to fuse elements of the popular sound with their own in a highly original way.

The following are some popular artists/groups that influenced jazz musicians:

- Sly and the Family Stone
- James Brown (rhythm section)
- Jimi Hendrix
- Ravi Shankar (Indian sitarist)
- Guitar players began to move away from the sound of Wes Montgomery to a rock sound, complete with sound-altering devices such as a wa-wa pedal, echoplex, and fuzz tone. The technique was still jazz oriented, but the sound was completely different. The acoustic bass was often eliminated in favor of the electric bass.
- In the mid-1960s, a group of young jazz musicians with similar interests living in New York formed a loose alliance that began mixing elements of rock/funk with jazz. The group included the following:

Larry Coryell, guitar
Joe Beck, guitar
Mike Mainieri, vibes
Gary Burton, vibes

Bob Moses, drums
Randy Brecker, trumpet
Warren Bernhardt, piano
Michael Brecker, tenor saxophone

- Important bands of the 1960s and early 1970s that fused elements of rock and jazz from this period include the following:

Larry Coryell's Free Spirits
Steve Marcus' Count's Rock Band

Gary Burton Quartet
Fourth Way

Jeremy Steig and the Satyrs

Blood Sweat and Tears
Al Kooper/Mike Bloomfield
Chicago (early period)
Chase
Tony Williams Lifetime

Mike Manieri's White Elephant
Dreams
Electric Flag
The Flock
Charles Lloyd Quartet

Soul Jazz

Cannonball Adderley Quintet

Ramsey Lewis Trio

- The following are groups from the 1970s who integrated the latest technological innovations into their overall concept:

The Brecker Brothers
Mahavishnu Orchestra
Prime Time (Ornette Coleman)

The L.A. Express (Tom Scott)

Lee Morgan's "The Sidewinder"
Herbie Mann Quartet

Return to Forever
Weather Report
Headhunters (Herbie Hancock)

Jazz-Flavored Artists/Bands

The Crusaders
Jeff Lorber Fusion
Grover Washington
George Benson
Kenny G
Hubert Laws

Spyrogyra
Steely Dan
Tower of Power
Chuck Mangione
Tom Browne
Herbie Mann

Post-1980s

The Yellowjackets
Steps Ahead
Pat Metheny Group
Chick Corea Elektric Band
Dave Grusin
Bela Fleck and the Flecktones

Important figures in jazz-rock fusion

TRUMPET	ALTO SAX	TENOR SAX	VIOLIN
Miles Davis	Dave Sanborn	Michael Brecker	Jon Luc Ponty
Randy Brecker	Hank Crawford	Grover Washington	Jerry Goodman
	Paul McCandless	Wayne Shorter	Michael Urbaniak
		Tom Scott	
		John Klemmer	
		Dave Liebman	
		Branford Marsalis	
		Joe Farrell	

KEYBOARD	BASS	DRUMS	GUITAR
Herbie Hancock	Jaco Pastorius	Billy Cobham	John McLaughlin
Chick Corea	Stanley Clarke	Lenny White	John Scofield
Joe Zawinul	Michael Henderson	Jack DeJohnette	Pat Metheny
Don Grolnick	John Patitucci	Tony Williams	Al DiMeola
Bob James	Marcus Miller	Steve Gadd	Larry Coryell
George Duke	Jimmy Haslip	Peter Erskine	Bill Frisell
Mike Nock	Abe Laboriel	Alphonse Mouzon	Scott Henderson
Jan Hammer	Miroslav Vitous	Dave Weckl	Ralph Towner
Dave Grusin	Jeff Berlin		George Benson
	Eddie Gomez		
	Marc Johnson		

Miles Davis Fusion Bands

- Miles Davis was one of the first well-established jazz musicians to experiment with mixing musical devices of rock and funk with jazz. In hindsight it should not come as a surprise to anyone who has followed Davis's career. Miles was always looking for new means to express his music and saw a way to reach the audience by coming up with yet another way to express his music.
- In 1968, Miles changed the way he organized his group by inviting guests to sit in on his recording sessions, creating a jam session-like atmosphere. The year 1968 was the end of his well-established bands in terms of personnel. He frequently drew from a pool of like-minded musicians. He combined members of his mid-1960s-era group with younger musicians who were comfortable in the new jazz-rock idiom.
- His recordings of "Eighty-One" from the album *E.S.P.* or "Freedom Jazz Dance" from the album *Miles Smiles* feature straight eighth notes played by drummer Tony Williams on cymbals and simple repetitive Motown-like bass figures played by Ron Carter that bear a striking resemblance to popular dance music.
- Miles insisted that electric piano be used in place of the acoustic piano beginning with the 1968 recording *Miles in the Sky*. His next album, *Filles de Kilimanjaro*, marks a move further away from the sound of his mid-1960s quintet.
- The albums *In a Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew*, released in 1969, helped change the direction of much jazz in the 1970s. Miles sometimes utilized as many as three keyboard players simultaneously and several percussionists on each recording. The melodies were more in the realm of rock, and the overall texture suggests a dark, floating, motionless feel.
- Miles met keyboardist Joe Zawinul in the late 1960s, and they began a series of collaborative efforts that were reminiscent of Davis's relationship with Gil Evans in the late 1940s and 1950s. Zawinul was the keyboard player with Cannonball Adderley's quintet and is the composer of the well-known composition "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy." Zawinul cowrote or wrote a number of pieces recorded by Davis in the late 1960s.

- Miles Davis's post-1968 recordings differ greatly from the previous period in the following ways:
- The electric piano, synthesizers, and organ replaced acoustic piano.
- Electric bass replaced acoustic bass.
- Studio overdubs and spliced recordings were used.
- Started using guitar players whose sound was influenced by Jimi Hendrix.
- Sax players spent more time on soprano saxophone in order to be heard.
- Often employed two to three drummers/percussionists.
- Improvisation was more concerned with color, texture, spontaneity, and mood.
- Did not utilize conventionally constructed compositions, nor did the musicians improvise on traditional harmony in the postbop style.
- Miles utilized the high register more often and used sound-altering devices such as a wa-wa pedal or an echoplex.
- Miles's playing was sometimes free of a steady pulse.
- Most of the complexity centered on the way the rhythm section functions.

Many of the musicians who worked with Davis from the mid-1960s went on to become bandleaders and formed their own fusion bands.

Wayne Shorter, tenor and soprano sax

Tony Williams, drums

Herbie Hancock, keyboard

Chick Corea, keyboard

Jack DeJohnette, drums

Bill Evans, tenor saxophone

Bob Berg, tenor and soprano saxophone

Joe Zawinul, keyboard

John Scofield, guitar

John McLaughlin, guitar

Dave Liebman, tenor saxophone

Mike Stern, guitar

Bennie Maupin, bass clarinet

Don Alias, congas

Dave Holland, bass

John McLaughlin

- Important British guitarist whose career started in the early 1960s.
- Played with drummer Tony Williams Lifetime (1969)—one of the first “power” trios emulating Jimi Hendrix mixed with a dose of free jazz.
- Recorded with Miles Davis where his playing was an integral part of *In a Silent Way*, *Jack Johnson*, and *Bitches Brew*.
- Possesses tremendous technique.

- Influenced many subsequent guitarists because of his cutting sound, unlike the typical warm jazz sound.
- Shows the influence of John Coltrane.
- Does not play swing eighth notes, but instead plays rather evenly.
- Interested in Indian music, employing many Indian instruments and musicians.
- His work with the Mahavishnu Orchestra reflects his interest in Indian music with its busy themes, changing meters, high volume, and *sheets of sound* approach to improvisation.

Weather Report

- Keyboardist Joe Zawinul, together with Wayne Shorter and bassist Miroslav Vitous, joined together to form a new group called Weather Report. The group had two drummers, one playing traditional drum set and the other playing exotic percussion instruments from around the world. Together they formed this band to explore new ideas in improvised music.
- All three were well-established jazz musicians who could play in the postbop idiom. Shorter and Zawinul were two of the most important jazz composers of the 1960s and 1970s. They intended to focus on improvised music, but not in a traditional postbop style. Each member of the group was an exceptional improviser and could spontaneously create highly original music.
- Weather Report was one of the most original fusion bands because they looked not only to rock and funk but also to the entire musical world for inspiration. Each successive album was different from the previous, as were the selections within each album.
- Their music is difficult to categorize because it represents a combination of many different approaches, which even include nonjazz styles:
 - Twentieth-century orchestral music
 - Funk music
 - Collective improvisation
 - Improvisation of texture and timbre
 - Music of other cultures and countries
 - More emphasis on improvisation than typical fusion bands
 - Extensive use of synthesizers
 - Use of exotic percussion instruments
 - Overdubbing in recording studios
 - Free-form music
- Weather Report abandoned the concept of individuals taking solos while the rhythm section accompanied. Wayne Shorter's saxophone playing became rather sparse, and solo interjections could come from any member of the band in order to complete an idea or create a mood or texture.
- In 1976, the brilliant electric fretless bassist and composer Jaco Pastorius joined the band. He brought another new dimension to the band by way of his compositions and innovative bass playing.

- By 1980, Pastorius had revolutionized the way the bass was played and set a new standard for bass players, continuing an evolution of innovative bass playing that began with Walter Page and Jimmy Blanton in the 1930s through Scott LaFaro in the early 1960s. After one exposure to Weather Report when Jaco was playing bass, the listener came away in awe of his prowess. He was capable of producing the same effect that Louis Armstrong created with his amazing trumpet solos many years earlier.

Herbie Hancock—Keyboard, Composer

- Herbie Hancock (born 1940) was born in Chicago, Illinois. He began piano lessons at age seven and quickly demonstrated prodigious talent by giving his first performance two years later. He performed with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at eleven years of age. He is well versed in classical music, but he has emphasized mostly jazz throughout his career. While in high school and college (Grinnell College), he played with local jazz groups and occasionally accompanied well-known jazz musicians. He graduated from Grinnell College with a degree in music composition in 1960.
- In 1960, Hancock moved to New York where he played and recorded with a band led by Donald Byrd.
- In 1963, Blue Note Records released Hancock's first solo album, *Taking Off* with trumpeter Freddie Hubbard and tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon. Hancock's compositional skills became apparent when "Watermelon Man," a funk-influenced selection on the album, was recorded by Mongo Santamaría and became a Top 10 hit.
- From 1963 to 1968, Hancock was a member of the now-legendary Miles Davis Quintet.
- In 1965, Hancock released *Maiden Voyage*, an album of Hancock compositions featuring drummer Tony Williams, bassist Ron Carter, tenor saxophonist George Coleman, and trumpeter

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Freddie Hubbard. "Maiden Voyage," the title selection, uses four different modes in creating an oceanlike texture in order to depict one's first voyage out to sea. "Eye of the Hurricane" uses hard bop effects as it gets across the experience of being in a hurricane. "Dolphin Dance" is a lovely ballad that creates the carefree nature of dolphins at sea. Hancock's ability to combine influences from different jazz styles on *Maiden Voyage* established him as one of the most prominent jazz pianists and composers among the current generation of jazz musicians. Miles Davis described Hancock as the heir to the Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk legacy.

- In 1969, Hancock used electric piano on Miles Davis's double album *Bitches Brew*. In the 1970s, he performed and recorded jazz that combined electric instruments with the rhythms of rock music.
- In 1973, his album *Headhunters* was an instant success, and its hit single, "Chameleon," became popular with both jazz and rock audiences. As a talented musician at home with electric instruments and the latest technological innovations for keyboards, Hancock used a keyboard synthesizer, an ARP String Ensemble, a Fender Rhodes electric piano, and a Hohner clavinet on the album.
- In the late 1970s, Hancock returned to a more traditional acoustic instrumentation as he recorded and performed with the V.S.O.P. Quintet (the Miles Davis 1960s Quintet with Freddie Hubbard on trumpet rather than Miles), the Herbie Hancock Quartet, and a series of duo piano concerts with Chick Corea.
- In the 1980s, Hancock released several albums that again demonstrated he could incorporate current developments in popular music into his music. *Future Shock* was one such album and included a "record scratcher" as part of the band. "Rockit," a highlight of the album, won a Grammy Award for best R&B instrumental.
- Herbie Hancock, as one of the preeminent jazz musicians of the second half of the twentieth century, has demonstrated he is a creative and convincing musician regardless of the style or context of his music.
- Hancock has also written music for movies (Antonioni's *Blow Up*, Bertrand Tavernier's *Round Midnight*, *A Soldier's Story*, *Jo Jo Dancer*, *Action Jackson*, *Harlem Nights*, *Colors*) and television (Bill Cosby's *Hey, Hey, It's Fat Albert*).

Keith Jarrett—Piano

- Keith Jarrett (born 1945) was born in Allentown, Pennsylvania. He began playing piano at the age of three. He studied classical music in his youth and was an acknowledged child prodigy by the time he was twelve. He briefly attended the Berklee School of Music in Boston when he was fifteen years old. When he was in his late teens, he moved to New York.
- For a brief period in the mid-1960s, he played with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. Then in 1966 he joined the Charles Lloyd Quartet. From 1970 to 1971, he played electric piano and organ with the fusion band led by Miles Davis.

- Jarrett released significant recordings in the 1970s of his solo improvisations on acoustic piano. He vehemently disliked using electronic instruments and established himself as an exclusively acoustic artist. He toured all over the world presenting himself as a solo jazz pianist who could improvise an entire concert. In addition, Jarrett often did not use the standard jazz repertoire (or any other repertoire) as vehicles for improvisation, but instead he improvised entirely new compositions in each performance. Such performances were recorded live and have been released as *Solo Concerts*, *The Köln Concert*, *Sun Bear Concerts*, *Paris Concert*, *Dark Intervals*, and *Vienna Concert*.
- In 1983, Jarrett formed a Bill Evans-influenced trio with bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Jack DeJohnette. They use the standard jazz repertoire as a point of departure for their trio improvisations.
- Jarrett has made numerous recordings of the compositions of such classical composers as J. S. Bach, Dmitri Shostakovich, Béla Bartók, Paul Hindemith, and Igor Stravinsky. He has also performed with world-renowned orchestras including the San Francisco Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, Brooklyn Philharmonic, and the Beethovenhalle Orchestra Bonn.

Chick Corea—Keyboard, Composer, Bandleader

- Anthony Armando (Chick) Corea (born 1941) was born in Chelsea, Massachusetts. Inspired by his father, who was a bandleader in the 1930s and 1940s, he began playing piano at four years of age. Corea's early influences include Bud Powell, Horace Silver, Lester Young, and Charlie Parker. He also listened to classical music.
- Corea first played with bands led by Willie Bobo, Cal Tjader, Herbie Mann, and Mongo Santamaria. Corea's experience with Santamaria's band produced a love for Latin music that would influence much of his playing and composing in the 1970s and 1980s.
- Latin pianists play the piano in a percussive manner. In fact, the piano is perceived to be an equal member of the percussion section in Latin bands. Salsa rhythms are commonly used as a means of comping for Latin pianists. Corea incorporated these and other Latin techniques into his jazz playing.
- In the late 1960s, Corea recorded *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs* with bassist Miroslav Vitous and drummer Roy Haynes. Influenced by Bill Evans trios, this album established Corea as an important bandleader and composer.
- In 1968, Corea joined Miles Davis's fusion band participating in the highly successful *Bitches Brew* sessions.
- From 1969 to 1971, Corea led an avant-garde group called Circle with bassist Dave Holland, drummer Barry Altschul, and saxophonist Anthony Braxton. Circle was influenced by Ornette Coleman but also incorporated ideas taken from the music of John Cage and Karl Stockhausen.

- In 1972, Corea used the Fender Rhodes electric piano in his group Return to Forever, a jazz fusion band. With band members Stanley Clarke on bass, Airto Moreira on drums, Joe Farrell on flute and tenor saxophone, and Flora Purim on vocals, Return to Forever recorded mostly Corea compositions. Corea's electric piano sound often combined with Farrell's flute to create a unique timbre. The electric piano often used salsa rhythms to accompany Flora Purim's airy vocals. The light, Latin-influenced sound they created was most effective on "Spain" from *Light as a Feather* (1973) and "La Fiesta" on *Return to Forever* (1972).
- From 1974 to 1976, Corea changed personnel and instrumentation in his second version of the Return to Forever band. Al DiMeola played acoustic and electric guitar, Stanley Clarke played bass, and Lenny White played drums. Corea used an assortment of keyboard instruments including the Micromoog synthesizer, Hohner clavinet, Fender Rhodes electric piano, and acoustic piano. Albums such as *No Mystery* (1975) and *Romantic Warrior* (1976) had a modern-sounding instrumentation with sophisticated Corea compositions and arrangements that demonstrated both classical and jazz influences.
- In 1985, Corea formed the Elektric Band with bassist John Patitucci and drummer Dave Weckl. The Elektric Band has made use of the latest technological innovations on all instruments. Corea made extensive use of the latest digital technology available to keyboard players. Patitucci used a six-string electric bass, making it more possible for him to build on the accomplishments of Jaco Pastorius. Dave Weckl incorporated electronic drums into his acoustic drum setup. Albums such as *The Chick Corea Elektric Band* (1986), *Light Years* (1987), *Eye of the Beholder* (1988), *Inside Out* (1990), *Beneath the Mask* (1991), and *Paint the World* (1993) have established Chick Corea as a top fusion bandleader, keyboard player, and composer of the 1980s and 1990s.
- In 1989, Corea, Patitucci, and Weckl released *The Akoustic Band*, an album of jazz standards performed in the traditional jazz piano trio setting. These musicians demonstrated they were just as comfortable playing acoustic instruments, implying perhaps that it's the music that matters most, not necessarily the instrumentation.

Pat Metheny—Guitar, Band Leader, Composer

- Pat Metheny (born 1954) was born and raised near Kansas City. He began playing trumpet at age eight and became interested in guitar at age thirteen. When he was fifteen he was already working with professional jazz musicians in the Kansas City area.
- In 1972, he attended the University of Miami where he came into contact with many top-quality jazz musicians including Jaco Pastorius, with whom he would later collaborate. From 1974 to 1977, he performed with vibraphonist Gary Burton. He

also founded a trio with bassist Jaco Pastorius and drummer Bob Moses, which performed together from 1975 to the end of 1976.

- Metheny's first album, *Bright Size Life*, recorded with his trio, was released in 1975. It established him as a new, up-and-coming jazz guitarist with a unique, original sound. His conception was modern yet derivative of traditional styles such as bebop, hard bop, blues, and rock.
- In 1977, Metheny formed the Pat Metheny Group with pianist Lyle Mays, bassist Mark Egan, and drummer Danny Gottlieb. They released their first album entitled *The Pat Metheny Group* in 1978.
- With the release of *American Garage* in 1980, the Pat Metheny Group was voted "Top Group" and Pat Metheny "Best Jazz Guitarist of the Year" by the New York Jazz Awards and Cashbox. Since that time, Pat Metheny and his group have traveled all over the world giving concerts and receiving awards and recognition for their high quality of music.
- Metheny has also been active as a jazz educator. He has taught at the University of Miami and Berkeley College of Music (in Boston), two of the top jazz educational institutions in the world. As a musician on the cutting edge of technology, Metheny has endorsed synthesizers and MIDI instruments as a viable means of musical expression. He has been a consistent winner of polls for "Best Jazz Guitarist," and he received an honorary doctorate in 1996.

Key Terms, Music, Figures and Bands

Terms

Soundstream
Jazz/rock
Fusion
Smooth jazz

Music (albums, works, etc.)

Hot Rats
The Dealer
In a Silent Way
Bitches Brew

Emergency!
The Inner Mounting Flame
Head Hunters
Romantic Warrior
Heavy Weather

Figures and Bands

Chico Hamilton
Larry Coryell
Miles Davis
Teo Macero
Tony Williams Lifetime

John McLaughlin
Mahavishnu Orchestra
Herbie Hancock
Mwandishi band
Chick Corea
Return to Forever
Josef Zawinul
Wayne Shorter
Weather Report
Jaco Pastorius
Kenny G

Jazz in the Sixties: Stuck Between a Rock and a Hard Place

Jazz Exodus

On July 17, 1967, John Coltrane, the spiritual leader of modern jazz, died of cancer. Coltrane's death left the jazz world rudderless at an inauspicious point in its history. Record sales were down, and clubs all across America that had for years booked jazz were either closing or redirecting their music policies. The audience was in exodus, and some observers began to ask again if jazz as a thriving art form was dead. It seemed the audience was disappearing partly because there was nothing new to choose from and, in part, because much of the latest trend—free jazz—just wasn't very listenable. As Mike Hennessey of *Melody Maker* put it, the reaction seemed to be "I've heard it all before or I never want to hear it again."¹ The biggest reason jazz was in trouble, however, was because of the dramatic rise in popularity of rock music. There were plenty of good reasons why rock was drawing so many fans. It was new and exciting, it spoke to the issues of the day in a way that instrumental music could never do, and it encompassed an abundance of creativity in all kinds of musical directions. These were all things that seemed to be lacking in jazz. There also was an abundance of charismatic new stars to attract fans, such as John Lennon, Mick Jagger, Jim Morrison, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Bob Dylan, and James Brown. Young people—who willfully made the 1960s *their* decade—could choose the Beatles, the Supremes, the Grateful Dead, the Doors, The Who, and many other bands to attach their identities to. It seemed somehow prophetic that as John Coltrane lay dying in a New York hospital, the "Summer of Love" was in full bloom, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* was at the top of the charts, and the hippie movement was spreading its message of peace and love from its homebase in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district.

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Jazz musicians were keenly aware that rock was slowly taking food off their table, and many had an openly suspicious if not downright condescending attitude toward it. In their view, rock was intended to be pop music rather than art, with the goal of pandering to the audience, getting on the radio, and selling records. In addition, rock musicians just weren't very good (in their opinion); it seemed that anyone could buy a guitar and an amp, learn three chords, write a song, and have a hit record—no talent required. Most jazz musicians had spent years and invested thousands of hours of practice learning the technical skills, harmony, vocabulary, and repertoire of their music. And here they were, searching for an audience and starving. Some jazz musicians, such as Stan Getz and Dexter Gordon, moved to Europe where there was still an appreciative audience (Eric Dolphy was also planning on moving there before he unexpectedly died). Some got out of music or took menial jobs while hanging on for dear life. In times like these, it's no wonder that some jazz musicians began to think the unthinkable: maybe it was time to cross over and play what the people want. Gerry Mulligan's 1965 album *If You Can't Beat Them, Join Them* seemed to sum up this line of thinking. Jazz covers of rock tunes started appearing, with the Beatles catalogue a favorite source. Some improbable examples that started creeping into jazz recordings included Ella Fitzgerald's "Can't Buy Me Love" and Chet Baker's "Got to Get You Into My Life." Even the great Duke Ellington got into the act with recordings of "I Wanna Hold Your Hand" and "All My Loving." Sadly, these records were not satisfying to anyone, let alone kids who were buying the real Beatles records.

Strange Bedfellows

On the other hand, rock musicians were already embracing jazz with generally interesting and creative results. Members of the Grateful Dead and the Doors were fans of Coltrane's extended improvisations, and in fact the drummers for both bands were originally jazz musicians. (Listen, for example, to the bossa nova beat played by drummer John Densmore on "Break on Through," the first track of the Doors' debut album.) Both bassist Jack Bruce and drummer Ginger Baker of Eric Clapton's power trio Cream were also jazzers, and that group Cream would often improvise on a single tune for an hour, like the Coltrane Quartet. Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys used jazz harmonies and instrumentation with satisfying results on the 1966 album *Pet Sounds*, while Jimi Hendrix brought a jazz-like improvisatory conception to many of his recordings, such as "Third Stone from the Sun" from his stunning 1967 debut album *Are You Experienced?* Frank Zappa's 1969 *Hot Rats* can arguably be called one of the very first successful complete albums that fused rock and jazz. Three bands that formed in the watershed year of 1967—Blood, Sweat & Tears, Chicago Transit Authority (later simply Chicago), and the Electric Flag—combined pop/rock rhythm sections with jazz-influenced horn sections with results that resonated with the buying public as well as jazz musicians. In the context of all the other experimenting that was going on in rock in the 1960s, it is only natural that jazz would be one of many sources from which rock musicians would draw upon.

That is not to say that there wasn't some tinkering with rock elements by a few jazz musicians. Many of the soul jazz records

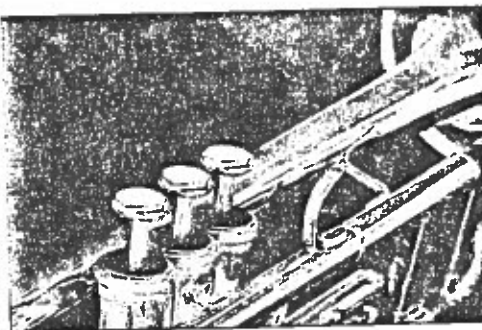
of the early sixties were drawing ever so close to rock rhythms, including Herbie Hancock's 1962 "Watermelon Man," Lee Morgan's 1963 "The Sidewinder," and Ramsey Lewis's 1965 "The 'In' Crowd." Perhaps the first successful rock conceptualization by a jazz musician was **Chico Hamilton's** 1966 album *The Dealer*. Hamilton used rock-influenced rhythms as well as an electric guitar, which seemed to be the essential missing link to a successful jazz/rock synthesis. Hamilton's guitarist was **Larry Coryell**, a twenty-three-year-old Texan, whose attitude was "Let's do something different! We love Coltrane but we also love the Beatles."² Coryell and vibraphonist Gary Burton in 1967 released *The Duster*, another early venture into fusing jazz and rock. Tenor saxophonist Charles Lloyd (a former member of Chico Hamilton's group) began adding rock elements with bebop and free jazz to create an interesting mix of sound that was not unlike some of the psychedelic bands from San Francisco. His quartet, which included drummer Jack DeJohnette and pianist Keith Jarrett, was the first jazz group to play at San Francisco's Fillmore Ballroom. At subsequent shows, they shared the billing with Hendrix, Joplin, Cream, the Grateful Dead, and Jefferson Airplane. Lloyd's two albums from 1966, *Dream Weaver* and *Forest Flower*, had huge crossover success with *Forest Flower* achieving sales of nearly one million copies and considerable FM airplay. The jazz press took notice of these developments. An August 1967 article in *Time*, titled "A Way Out Of The Muddle," expressed hope that rock and jazz might eventually commingle. *Down Beat* in 1968 stated that jazz was in "crying need of a bigger audience. If rock offers a bridge, jazz would be foolish not to cross it."³

Miles Davis: To the Rescue

Bitches Brew

Miles Davis was also looking to the potential of crossing the bridge to expand his audience. By 1967, Davis had been one of the most admired musicians in jazz for nearly twenty years, during which time he had played a consistently pivotal role in shaping the music's evolution. His current quintet, a hard bop/free jazz hybrid that included some of the top musicians in jazz, was arguably the most forward-thinking group of his career. Davis was popular with young and old listeners; blacks as well as whites identified with him and his music, albeit for different reasons. But even he couldn't escape noticing that his audiences were dwindling. By the mid 1960s, Davis had begun listening to James Brown, Sly and the Family Stone, and Jimi Hendrix, and he was intrigued with the rhythms as well as the electric guitars, basses, and keyboards they used. Slowly, he began to integrate these elements into his own music. His first venture came in 1968 on the album *Miles in the Sky*, which he had Herbie Hancock playing an electric piano, added guitarist George Benson on one track, and included the rock-rhythmed song "Stuff." Rock rhythms and electric pianos continued on his next album, *Filles de Kilimanjaro*, which included "Mademoiselle Mabry" (written for his current wife Betty Mabry), a song whose chord progression is nearly identical to Hendrix's "The Wind Cries Mary." By years end, it was clear to Davis that this was the direction his music had to go: "I wasn't prepared to be a memory yet,"⁴

he said. Also supporting Davis in his decision to go after a younger audience was the new president of Columbia Records, Clive Davis, who hoped to boost Davis's record sales up to near the levels of other Columbia artists such as Blood, Sweat and Tears, Sly Stone, and Bob Dylan.



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At the end of 1968, Davis boldly moved forward and disbanded his famous second quintet. The following February, he recorded his most rock-oriented album to date, the ethereal *In a Silent Way*. His new group was larger, using three electric keyboardists (Herbie Hancock, Josef Zawinul, and Chick Corea), an electric bass guitarist (Dave Holland) and a rock-influenced guitarist, Briton John McLaughlin. But *In a Silent Way* was still one step away from a truly groundbreaking fusion of jazz and rock; it would be Davis's next album that finally tore down the wall that separated the two styles. In August 1969, Davis re-entered the Columbia Studios in New York and spent three days recording the double album *Bitches Brew*, which is widely credited as the first successful synthesis of jazz and rock. Davis brought together a who's who in contemporary jazz for the album, including Corea and Zawinul on electric pianos, Wayne Shorter and Bennie Maupin on saxophones and woodwinds, Dave Holland and Harvey Brooks on bass, McLaughlin on guitar and Lenny White, Billy Cobham and Jack DeJohnette on drums. For the sessions, Davis put the musicians in a semi-circle around him so he could supervise the proceedings; he also made sure that everything was caught on tape. "Miles assembled an experiment with musicians he liked," said DeJohnette. "He wrote a few sketches, but the idea was to get the spontaneity down. It was Miles conducting an orchestra in real time. He was like a painter changing the canvas by conducting his group."⁵

The Blueprint

The music that the Davis group recorded was groundbreaking in its originality, conception and realization. It is perhaps best described by author Alyn Shipton, who calls it a "soundstream" "in which [Miles], the other horns, and chordal instruments soloed and interacted over a rock-based accompaniment."⁶ By using rock and funk rhythms exclusively, Davis made a complete break with traditional jazz swing and Latin-influenced rhythms. By using as many as fourteen musicians—most of whom were either rhythm section and/or electric instrumentalists—Davis created a postmodernist big band that was unlike anything previously heard in jazz (or rock for that matter). Instrumental in creating the soundstream concept was producer **Teo Macero**, who in postproduction sessions edited sections of tape together to construct repeating loops, extended jams, tempo changes, and other interesting effects in the creation of compositions that weren't actually performed as such in the studio. (Keyboardist Zawinul didn't even recognize the recording when he heard a secretary at the CBS offices playing the edited

tracks a few weeks later. “I asked her, ‘Who the hell is this?’ And she replied, ‘It’s that *Bitches Brew* thing.’ I thought, damn, that’s great.”⁷) Such bold applications of studio postproduction had been scarcely used in jazz up to this point, but had become *de rigueur* in rock. Davis further utilized studio technology by occasionally using an echo effect on his trumpet.

In spite of (or most likely *because of*) its groundbreaking nature, *Bitches Brew* was controversial, drawing criticism from conservative jazz fans, musicians, and the press. To them, Davis was “selling out” and abandoning the traditions of jazz for pop stardom. It made no difference to them that nearly all the songs were too long and too abstract for radio play. The purists condemned the overabundance of rock rhythms, the use of electric instruments, and the discarding of traditional jazz forms and rhythms. Macero’s postproduction was also a sticking point; such flagrant use of editing took away the spontaneity that is supposedly essential to jazz. Some traditionalists took issue with the way the album was marketed, as the surrealistic cover artwork was obviously targeted to a younger, non-traditional jazz audience. A few even complained about the use of the “B” word in the title. However, *Bitches Brew* succeeded in connecting Davis with the younger and much larger fan base that he coveted, and sold more than 400,000 copies in its first year. *Bitches Brew* eventually became his first gold record (a distinction given to records with sales exceeding 500,000; Davis’s previous albums generally sold on average less than 100,000 units). It also won a Grammy Award in 1970. Today, *Bitches Brew* is considered to be the blueprint album in the creation of the styles that became known as **jazz/rock** and **fusion**. Following the release of *Bitches Brew*, Davis’s band went on tour with the rock group Santana and began playing rock venues like San Francisco’s Fillmore Ballroom. In the next few years, Davis recorded more jazz/rock albums, including two in 1970, *A Tribute to Jack Johnson* and *Live/Evil* on which he used a wah-wah pedal—a device normally used by guitarists—attached to his trumpet. Another influential album was 1972’s *On the Corner*, whose repetitive bass and drum grooves foreshadowed the hip-hop and drum and bass styles. But Miles’s mid-career rejuvenation eventually took its toll, and in 1975, in poor health and artistically drained, he stopped performing and recording. He would not appear in public or even pick up his horn for more than five years.



Jazz/Rock is the earliest form of fusing jazz and rock; most often takes the form of the soundstream approach of 1970s Miles Davis or early Weather Report recordings. B



Fusion is an equal triangulation of jazz, rock, and pop; good examples are the LPs *Head Hunters* by Herbie Hancock and *Heavy Weather* by Weather Report. B

Important 1970s Jazz/Rock Fusionists

Tony Williams Lifetime: The New Organ Trio

The musicians who played on *Bitches Brew* and other Davis albums from this period knew that there was no turning back from fusing jazz and rock, and wasted little time in creating their own visions of what direction jazz/rock should take. Because so many went on to start seminal jazz/rock and fusion bands in the 1970s, it could be said that Miles Davis once again spawned a musical Diaspora of sorts, much as he had done after the release of the *Birth of the Cool* and *Kind of Blue*. The first of the Davis alumni jazz/rock bands was the **Tony Williams Lifetime**, a short-lived but innovative trio formed in 1969, consisting of three of jazz’s most high energy

players: Williams on drums, John McLaughlin on guitar, and Larry Young on organ. During its incubation period, each of the musicians in the group drew inspiration by jamming with Jimi Hendrix, consequently, the group's debut album *Emergency!* (1969) is much more explosive and tightly formatted than the Davis albums of the same period. Williams even sings (or does a sort of beatnik-like rapping) on a few of the songs, bringing the band even closer to the aesthetic of rock music. Former Cream bassist Jack Bruce joined the group for their next album, but McLaughlin left soon afterward. Lifetime disbanded in 1972, although they reformed with a different lineup for a short period in 1975.

The Mahavishnu Orchestra: Jazz Goes International

Although Briton **John McLaughlin** came to America in February 1969 to join Tony Williams Lifetime, he so impressed Miles Davis with his playing that the trumpeter asked him to join his own group. McLaughlin declined, but recorded several albums with Davis over the next two years, including *In a Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew* (on which there is a song named for him). McLaughlin had earlier become a fixture on the English jazz scene as both a performer and as a session musician, and had recently recorded the innovative solo album *Extrapolations* there. After leaving Williams's group, and with Davis's encouragement, he decided to form his own jazz/rock group. **The Mahavishnu Orchestra** (using the name given to McLaughlin by his Indian guru Sri Chinmoy) opened in July 1971 at the Gaslight in Greenwich Village to rave reviews. The group had an international lineup (an early prognosticator of the coming globalization of jazz), with Englishman McLaughlin, Panamanian drummer Billy Cobham, Irish bassist Rick Laird, Czech keyboardist Jan Hammer, and American electric violinist Jerry Goodman. What captivated audiences at the Gaslight (and won the group an extended stay) was the power, intensity, and complexity of their music. It was loud and high energy; there were numerous sudden changes in tempo and meter. The melodies were bop-like in their complexity, but with an undeniable Indian quality, and were often played by guitar, synthesizer, and electric violin in unison. Hammer skillfully used the pitch wheel on his synthesizer, enabling him to achieve a guitar-like quality. Cobham played with such ferocity and drive that the drums became one of the group's primary voices. McLaughlin himself mesmerized audiences by often dressing completely in white while playing a double-neck electric guitar—one neck having six strings and the other twelve. The music was also quite varied, ranging from bone crunching bombastic to the serene—the violent to the tender. Folk, classical and blues elements were also present, as were the influences from Eastern cultures, particularly India.

While performing at the Gaslight, the Mahavishnu Orchestra recorded their first album, *The Inner Mounting Flame*. Picking up where Tony Williams Lifetime left off, the music is more focused and structured than Davis's albums. Combining virtuosic solo improvisations, stunning ensemble playing, electronic effects (such as Hammer using a ring modulator on his electric piano), and the unusual sound of an electric guitar, synthesizer, and an electric violin playing together, the album is a stunning debut that

Members of the Mahavishnu Orchestra

- John McLaughlin guitar
- Jerry Goodman electric violin
- Jan Hammer keyboards
- Rick Laird bass
- Billy Cobham drums

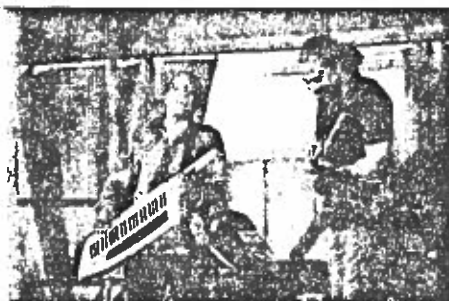


captured the intensity of their live performances. The press was also impressed. *Melody Maker* expressed a common sentiment when it said, "The effects of this album will be far-reaching."⁸ In 1973, the group released two more albums that captured the electricity of the first, *Birds of Fire* and the live *Between Nothingness and Eternity*. These albums would be the last releases at the time with the group's original personnel (although one more album, *The Lost Trident Sessions*, made from a session on June 25, 1973, was released in 1999). Around this time, internal disagreements led to the breakup of the band. In 1974, McLaughlin reformed the Mahavishnu Orchestra with Jean-Luc Ponty on violin, Gayle Moran on keyboards, Ralphie Armstrong on bass, and Narada Michael Walden on drums. The new lineup released three more albums before disbanding in 1975.

Herbie Hancock: Mwandishi Turns to Head Hunting

During the mid 1960s, **Herbie Hancock** established himself as one of the foremost pianists in jazz by virtue of his tenure with Miles Davis's 60s quintet. Although Davis disbanded the group in late 1968, rumors persist to this day that he actually fired Hancock prior to that over a personal matter. In any event, Hancock continued to record with Davis through 1972, taking part in sessions for *In a Silent Way*, *A Tribute to Jack Johnson*, and *On the Corner*, among

others. During his time with Davis, Hancock released a number of well-received hard bop–oriented albums for Blue Note under his own name, including *Empyrean Isles* in 1964, *Maiden Voyage* in 1965, and *Speak Like a Child* in 1968. In 1969, however, he left the venerable jazz label and signed a



Herbie Hancock in the 1970s. © 2013 by Brian Ross. Used under license of Shutterstock, Inc.

lucrative contract with the rock-oriented Warner Brothers and put together a sextet with Billy Hart on drums, Buster Williams on bass, Bennie Maupin on bass clarinet and saxophones, Eddie Henderson on trumpet, and Julian Priester on trombone. Known as the "Mwandishi" band for the members' use of Swahili aliases (Hancock became "Mwandishi," [composer], Hart "Jabali" [rock], Williams "Mchezaji" [player], and so on), they released three albums between 1970 and 1972. The music ranges from *Bitches Brew*-ish space funk (*Mwandishi*) to avant-garde electronica jazz (*Crossings*) to a combination of the two (*Sextant*). On the last two albums, Moog synthesizer stylist Dr. Patrick Gleason was brought in to create an otherworldly ambience with electronic sound effects. These effects, created on the state of the art analog synthesizers of the day, were often painstaking to create and manipulate. Today they are much more easily created on digital synths and laptops, and are making their way back into contemporary jazz (Chapter 9). Hancock himself also experimented with different keyboards during this period, using the Fender Rhodes electric piano (which

he occasionally modified with echo, ring modulator or wah-wah effects), the Hohner D-6 clavinet, and the Mellotron.

Warner Brothers, however, lost their patience with Hancock's "space-jazz" and dropped him after the release of *Crossings*. At this point, Hancock signed with Columbia, which released *Sextant*, but urged him to pursue a larger audience as Miles Davis had done. After disbanding the Mwandishi band, Hancock put together a quintet with funk musicians who could play jazz—rather than jazz musicians who could play funk. Not only was this exactly the opposite approach taken by Davis and others (who filled out their jazz/rock bands with established jazz musicians), it was a major *touché* statement to all the jazz musicians who looked down their noses at rock players. Known as the Head Hunters, the new band consisted of Bennie Maupin (held over from the Mwandishi band), Harvey Mason on drums, Paul Jackson on bass, and Bill Summers on percussion. Inspired by the psychedelic rhythm and blues of Sly and the Family Stone, and in particular Sly's 1970 Number 1 hit "Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Agin)," Hancock abandoned the soundstream approach and embraced tight funk grooves. "I didn't know what Sly was doing. I heard the chorus, but how could he think of that? I was afraid that that was something I couldn't do, when here I am, I call myself a musician; it bothered me. Then at a certain point I decided to try my hand at funk when I did [the 1973 LP] *Head Hunters*."¹¹ Everything about *Head Hunters* was done in a radically different way. After recording hours of jam sessions in the studio, the group sifted through the tapes, reworked, and re-recorded the music and then added overdubs, bringing the cost to an unheard of \$100,000. Once the album was completed, it was first made available to urban R&B radio stations and then to free form progressive rock FM stations, a strategy that nurtured a non-traditional customer base before it was even released. Once released in October 1973, *Head Hunters* took just six months to reach gold status. In 1986, it became the first jazz album to go platinum (with sales of one million units). For more than ten years afterward, *Head Hunters* remained the largest-selling jazz album in history.*

More than any other album in the jazz/rock fusion era, *Head Hunters* marked a "no turning back" moment. Record labels and jazz musicians could now clearly see the rewards of targeting their music toward a youthful rock audience. The trick ultimately came down to walking the line between accessibility and credibility. The music had to be listener-friendly enough to sell, but it had to have enough jazz integrity to not "sell out." Hancock managed to do this with *Head Hunters*; there are catchy riffs ("Chameleon") and soothing rhythm and blues ("Vein Melter"), as well as sweltering jazz/funk grooves ("Sly"). As popular as the hit "Chameleon" became, the highlight of the album is arguably the reworking of Hancock's 1962 soul jazz standard "Watermelon Man," which on *Head Hunters* became a slow pressure cooker that opens with percussionist Summers blowing rhythmically into a coke bottle. This recording opened up a whole new way for musicians to think about the possibilities inherent in reworking jazz standards, a practice that has

* Sales of Miles Davis's *Kind of Blue* eventually surpassed *Head Hunters*. *Kind of Blue* went platinum in 1997 and multi-platinum in 1999 (figures and dates from RIAA, www.riaa.com).

become increasingly fashionable in the years since. Although Hancock suffered his share of criticism for selling out with *Head Hunters*, the years immediately following its release saw him moving in the direction that would mark the remainder of his career: that is, moving in several directions at once. Although he quickly followed *Head Hunters* with several more funk-influenced albums (and played to sold out arenas—with Miles Davis as his opening act!), he also reunited and toured with the all-acoustic Davis 1960s quintet (without Davis, who was replaced by Freddie Hubbard) became known as the V.S.O.P. Quintet. He also recorded and toured with Chick Corea, playing jazz standards on dual acoustic pianos.

Chick Corea and Return to Forever: Jazz Meets Art Rock

Chick Corea came to jazz/rock after spending much of the 1960s as the consummate sideman, working for (to name just a few) Stan Getz, Mongo Santamaria, Sarah Vaughan, Herbie Mann, and Dizzy Gillespie. Between these gigs, Corea found the time to record two notable “straight-ahead” acoustic jazz albums as a leader, *Tones for Joan's Bones* in 1966 and *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs* in 1968. Along with this impressive resume, Corea established a reputation as an extremely rhythmic player with a forceful touch and amazing technique. In the summer of 1968, he began working for Miles Davis, who immediately put him on the electric piano, beginning with the album *Filles de Kilimanjaro*. Although Corea officially left Davis in September 1970, he continued to record with him through the summer of 1972, and played on Davis's albums *In a Silent Way*, *Bitches Brew*, *Live/Evil*, and *On the Corner* (and several others). In late 1970, Corea formed the short-lived experimental free jazz quartet Circle, with saxophonist Anthony Braxton, drummer Barry Altschul, and bassist Dave Holland. In April 1972, Corea recorded the acclaimed *Piano Improvisations, Vol. 1 and 2*, albums that helped fuel the popularity of solo piano albums in the 1970s. He also recorded a remarkable duet album with vibist Gary Burton, titled *Crystal Silence*. Later that year, he formed the group that would be the focus of much of his career work in the 1970s, **Return to Forever**.

Return to Forever began as a West Coast-ish, Latin jazz group, with saxophonist Joe Farrell, bass wizard Stanley Clarke, and the Brazilian husband/wife team of Airto Moreira and Flora Purim on drums and vocals, respectively. In this rendition of the band, Corea played the electric piano exclusively. Two albums were released, *Return to Forever* and the highly regarded *Light as a Feather*, which includes the first recorded version of Corea's standard “Spain.” The music *was* literally light as a feather, with smooth samba grooves and soothing vocals, creating a context for Corea's precise improvisations. In 1973, Corea retooled Return to Forever into a harder-edged fusion band with the addition of guitarist Bill Connors and *Bitches Brew* drummer Lenny White to replace Farrell, Moreira, and Purim. After one album, Connors was replaced by the technically flashier Al Di Meola. The albums from this version of Return to Forever, *Hymn of the Seventh Galaxy*, *Where*

Have I Known You Before, and *No Mystery* reveal a sound that has largely abandoned jazz elements (except for improvised solos) and is closer to the progressive rock bands of the era. With this version of *Return to Forever*, Corea made extensive use of synthesizers as well as acoustic and electric piano. With its new direction, *Return to Forever*'s promising record sales enabled the group to sign with Columbia Records. With Columbia's clout behind them, the next album, *Romantic Warrior* (1976) became *Return to Forever*'s biggest seller, eventually achieving certified gold status. *Romantic Warrior* is at heart an art rock concept album based around medieval themes, complete with cover illustration and composition titles like "Medieval Overture" and "Duel of the Jester and the Tyrant." The compositions are high energy, complex epics that require tremendous technical skills, with a sound reminiscent of bands such as Yes and King Crimson. Corea once again creates most of the orchestration with an ambitious use of synthesizer layering.

Despite its wide popularity, *Romantic Warrior* seemed to cross a line for some jazz fans, some of whom questioned whether it was jazz at all, or just jazzy-sounding rock. It was certainly highly if not overly produced, and perhaps a little too pretentious. In any event, it would be the last album for the second version of *Return to Forever*, as White and Di Meola left to pursue other projects. In the meantime, Corea reformed the group with a six-piece horn section, replacing White and Di Meola with Gerry Brown on drums and future wife Gayle Moran on keyboards and vocals. The group produced only two albums, *Music Magic* and *R.T.F. Live*, before it disbanded in late 1977. Corea continued to pursue the concept album idea from time to time as a soloist, most notably with 1978's *Mad Hatter*. The classic RTF lineup of Corea, Clarke, White, and Di Meola reunited for tours in 1993 and 2008, but did not record.

Weather Report: Heavy Weathermen

Formed in 1971 by keyboardist **Josef Zawinul** and saxophonist **Wayne Shorter**, **Weather Report** became the standard bearer for jazz/rock and fusion in the 1970s and early 1980s. Zawinul and Shorter met in 1959 shortly after Zawinul had moved to New York from his native Vienna, Austria (via Berklee College of Music in Boston, which he briefly attended in 1958). At the time, Zawinul could barely speak English, but he and Shorter hit it off—both personally and musically.⁹ Later that year, the two played together in Maynard Ferguson's band for a short time before Shorter left to join the Jazz Messengers. In 1961, Zawinul joined the Cannonball Adderley Quintet, and became one of the group's primary writers, composing such soul jazz tunes as "Walk Tall," "The Country Preacher," and "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy," which became a Number 11 hit on the *Billboard* pop charts in 1967 and a jazz standard. "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy" was also the first recording on which Zawinul used an electric piano, making him one of the first jazz pianists to do so. Eventually Zawinul began using a ring modulator and wah-wah pedal to further modify the sound of the electric piano, effects that he would continue to use in *Weather Report*. Zawinul's writing and electric playing soon caught the attention of Miles Davis, who utilized both on *In a Silent Way* (whose title

Members of *Weather Report* (1977)

- Josef Zawinul: keyboards
- Wayne Shorter: soprano and tenor saxophone
- Jaco Pastorius: bass
- Manolo Badrena: percussion
- Alex Acuña: drums



track was composed by Zawinul) and *Bitches Brew* (on which Zawinul contributed the twenty-minute composition "Pharaoh's Dance"). Zawinul's presence at the Davis sessions also reunited him with Shorter, and before long, the two began talking about starting their own group. It was a partnership based on mutual respect and sense of direction, according to Shorter: "Our main connection was that independently, not knowing the other was doing it, we both started changing the form of music around... We were very much alike."¹⁰ Czech bassist Miroslav Vitous, with whom both had recently recorded, was also instrumental in the creation of the group. With the addition of drummer Alphonse Mouzon and Brazilian percussionist Airto Moreira, the first lineup for Weather Report was set.

In the beginning Weather Report was cut in the "soundstream" mold of the early Davis jazz/rock albums. The most noticeable difference between their debut album *Weather Report* (recorded March 1971) and *Bitches Brew* was that the songs—all written by Shorter, Zawinul, or Vitous—were generally much shorter and more focused. Where *Bitches Brew* had generated controversy, *Weather Report* garnered a *Down Beat* Album of the Year Award. (In fact, *Down Beat* was so excited about the album that before it was even released, the magazine gave it a five-star, two-page review that opened with, "An extraordinary new group merits an extraordinary review of its debut album."¹¹) Over the course of the next two years, Weather Report's music slowly put more emphasis on funk and rock rhythmic grooves and electric piano/synthesizer experimentation by Zawinul. Two more albums, *I Sing the Body Electric* (1971) and *Sweetnighter* (1973), were recorded, with drummer Eric Gravatt and percussionist Dom Um Romão joining the group, replacing Mouzon and Moreira. In 1974, the band replaced Vitous with bassist Alphonso Johnson, and continued to evolve by incorporating more listener-friendly riffs and dance grooves. *Mysterious Traveller*, released that same year, became the first of four Weather Report albums in a row to win *Down Beat* Album of the Year Awards, an indication that the group was entering into an intensely creative and commercially successful period. By this time, the group's albums were selling exceptionally well, and the group was beginning to draw large college-aged crowds to its concerts.

In early 1976, after a concert in Florida, Joe Zawinul was introduced to a young man who proclaimed himself to be "the greatest bass player in the world." Zawinul was more than a little amused, until a local reporter nudged him and said that the kid was not lying. Today there is little argument that the kid, twenty-five-year-old **Jaco Pastorius** was indeed just that. Pastorius was one of the first important jazz musicians who came of age listening to rock music as much if not more than jazz, and in his youth had played in a number of rock and R&B bands, including Wayne Cochran and The C.C. Riders. Although by the time he joined Weather Report he was a skilled jazz virtuoso on the bass guitar as well as an accomplished songwriter, there was an unmistakable rock and roll attitude about him. "Pastorius had the long hair and the bandanna tied around his head, and he was always jumping off the stage," commented Shorter. "He had a very pronounced way of playing, and there was an immediate presence of tone on his bass,

which looked like a guitar. He had everything to give the audience that rock association."¹² Pastorius energized Weather Report with his playing and songwriting, and in his six-year stay with the band became a musical force equal to the co-founders. His addition, along with drummer Alex Acuña and percussionist Manolo Badrena, enabled Weather Report to leap into pop superstardom with rock concert-like live performances and the release of *Black Market* (1976) and *Heavy Weather* (1977). *Heavy Weather* is arguably the gold standard in 1970s fusion albums, with outstanding compositions from all three writers and inspired playing from the entire band. The centerpiece of the album is Zawinul's "Birdland," a cleverly written tune that incorporates catchy pop-friendly melodies, innovative use of bass harmonics, and Zawinul's use of his full arsenal of keyboards to create a synthetic big band sound. "Birdland" (named after the famous New York club) hit Number 1 on the jazz charts, became a jazz standard, and remained popular for years, helped out in part by Manhattan Transfer's popular vocal rendition, which earned that group a Grammy Award in 1980.

Heavy Weather reached Number 30 on the pop charts, sold more than half a million copies (earning a gold record) and helped elevate Weather Report to playing festivals and stadiums. The album was universally regarded as a creative masterpiece (it was named album of the year by virtually every music magazine), and came along at a time when jazz/rock was beginning to show signs of staleness. *Heavy Weather* represents the commercial and critical peak of a band that successfully integrated inventive improvisation, arranged parts, jazz, rock, ethnic influences, and technology. As Jeff Pressing notes, "Alongside Duke Ellington, Weather Report created a body of work that numbers among the most diverse and imaginative in jazz."¹³ The group stayed together until 1986 and recorded sixteen albums in all. Pastorius left in 1982 and was tragically murdered in 1987 after several years of mental issues. Joe Zawinul died on September 11, 2007.

Fusion Evolves: Can We Still Call This Jazz?

As jazz/rock and fusion became the latest "New Thing," the trick for jazz musicians became to generate a larger audience for their music without sacrificing their souls to the pop world. Some did a remarkable job of maintaining a good accessibility/credibility balance; albums such as *Head Hunters*, *Heavy Weather*, and *The Inner Mounting Flame* are compelling to listen to even today. However, for many jazz musicians the path to increased visibility became a slippery slope to a pact with the pop "devil." Some fusion groups became overly pretentious in their use of showmanship, or as Stuart Nicholson states, "In the end this virtuosity took on a strained, dandyish quality that suggested the style had entered a narcissistic cul-de-sac."¹⁴ Other groups became overly pop-oriented. The worst offenders of all crossed both lines. Between the late 1960s and the late 1980s, a jazz/rock to fusion to a new pop-oriented style called **smooth jazz** evolution occurred, with the lines between each style as gray as the lines between rain to sleet to snow. At one end there is *Bitches Brew*; on the other end is *Duotones*, the 1986 album by Kenneth Gorelick, better known as **Kenny G**. *Duotones* is arguably

Defining Jazz/Rock, Fusion, and Smooth Jazz

- Jazz/Rock places a high priority on jazz tradition and non-commercial elements; most often takes the form of the "soundstream" approach of early 1970s Miles Davis or early Weather Report
- Fusion is an equal triangulation of jazz, rock, and pop; good examples are the works of Pat Metheny and the Yellowjackets; developed in the mid to late 1970s
- Smooth jazz is an overly commercial, pop-oriented jazz style with emphasis on catchy melodies, repetition, and danceable grooves; the best example is Kenny G

the low water mark in smooth jazz, with simple, repetitive pop melodies and chord progressions, which, to some, is better suited for background music at shopping malls and on the Weather Channel. However, it was clearly a winner in the sales department, going gold in May 1987, platinum one month later and multi-platinum in November 1987—and eventually being certified 5× platinum in 1995. The album's opening track "Songbird" also was a hit, reaching Number 4 on the *Billboard* Hot 100 chart. *Duotones* was merely the breakthrough album for Kenny G, who as of July 2006 has sold 48 million albums (which is more than Nirvana and The Police combined), one of which, *Breathless*, sold 12 million copies. Although Kenny G's albums are listed on (and quite often top) the Contemporary Jazz Albums chart, it is fair to ask whether they are really jazz albums. Certainly it is for many listeners, but it is a complicated question without an easy answer. (The issue of how to draw the line between pop and jazz will be addressed in greater detail in Chapter 9.) Another more pertinent question for our current chapter is: how did we get here from there?

If *Bitches Brew* is jazz/rock and *Duotones* is smooth jazz, what is fusion? What is the difference between the three? For our purposes, jazz/rock will be defined as rock influenced jazz that places a high priority on improvisation and non-commercial elements, and most often takes the form of the soundstream approach of the early 1970s Miles Davis and Weather Report recordings. By the mid 1970s, this approach was evolving into a more focused and stylized form that became known as jazz/rock fusion, or simply fusion. Fusion can be characterized by the equal triangulation of jazz, rock and pop that places increased emphasis on studio production, memorable melodic riffs and catchy rhythmic grooves without abandoning jazz traditions. Using this definition, *Head Hunters* and *Heavy Weather* can be called early examples of fusion. Fusion became very popular with jazz musicians in the late 1970s and is so to this day; artists such as guitarists Pat Metheny and John Scofield and saxophonist Michael Brecker produced great fusion records in the 1980s, 1990s and well into the 21st century, and their work will be discussed further in chapter 7. (Even though Metheny detests the word fusion—calling it the "F" word—there is really no other way to categorize this music.)

Smooth jazz virtually eliminates the rock elements and puts its emphasis on pop: danceable beats, catchy melodies, and repetition, making sure that there is nothing that is too musically adventurous. Smooth jazz really started to emerge in the mid to late 1970s, when records like George Benson's "This Masquerade" (Number 10, 1976), Chuck Mangione's "Feels So Good" (Number 4, 1978), and Spyro Gyra's "Morning Dance" (Number 24, 1979) began appearing on AM radio. Throughout the 1980s, artists such as singer Al Jarreau, tenor saxophonist Grover Washington, Jr., and trumpeter Herb Alpert began to get considerable radio play and the corresponding increase in record sales. In 1987, Los Angeles radio station KTWV (The Wave) established smooth jazz as a radio format, which by the mid 1990s was programmed by more than 200 stations. For a few years, it seemed that jazz—at least this style of jazz—was on its way back onto the popular culture radar screen. Could this be the swing era all over again? Well, not exactly. Smooth jazz seemed to lose its luster by the end of the 1990s. Today, however, there are still more

than 50 "terrestrial" radio stations that program smooth jazz, as well as a number of satellite stations.

Notes

1. Nicholson, Stuart: "Fusions and Crossovers," *The Cambridge Companion to Jazz*, pg 218
2. *Down Beat*, 10/84, pg 16; also *The Cambridge Companion to Jazz*, pg 221
3. Morgenstern, Dan: *Down Beat Yearbook 1968*, pg 13; also *The Cambridge Companion to Jazz*, pg 223
4. Davis, Miles with Quincy Troupe: *Miles: The Autobiography*, pg 298
5. Quoted in "Bitches Brew: The Making of the Most Revolutionary Jazz Album in History," by Ouellette, Dan, *Down Beat*, 12/99, pg 33
6. Shipton, Alyn: *A New History of Jazz*, pg 860
7. Ouellette, pg 37
8. *Melody Maker*, 4/1/72, pg 28
9. Mercer, Michelle: *Footprints: The Life and Music of Wayne Shorter*, pg 61
10. Ibid, pg 141
11. Morgenstern, Dan, review in *Down Beat*, 5/27/71
12. Mercer, pg 176
13. Pressing, Jeff: "Fusions and Crossovers" from *The Cambridge Companion to Jazz*, pg 230
14. Pond, Steven F.: *Head Hunters: The Making of Jazz's First Platinum Album*
15. Nicholson, Stuart: *Jazz: The 1980s Resurgence*, pg 148