

JAZZ



The Success

For 10 years **George Benson** was a highly respected but not highly paid jazz guitarist known for a technical perfection delivered so delicately as to sound almost effortless. With his hit vocal "This Masquerade" and two million sales of *Breezin'* (the first and so far only album by a pure jazz artist to break the one million barrier), Benson went pop to acquire new fans. In the process, he has also acquired two Mercedes, a Peugeot and a comfortable mansion in New Jersey.

Benson learned to play guitar from his stepfather and recorded his first record, as Little Georgie Benson, at age 10. In addition to jazz, his influences have been such rhythm and blues artists as Ray Charles, Sam Cooke and the former Little Stevie Wonder.

The Jazzy Rockers

Steely Dan is songwriting duo Walter Becker and Donald Fagen, who say they don't try to write Top 40 hits. In spite of themselves, they've had a few: "Do It Again," "Reelin' in the Years" and "Rikki Don't Lose That Number." Becker and Fagen use jazz-inspired riffs and chord schemes and Latin rhythms but weave them into tight, rock-inspired packages. This jazzy brew is both a critical and commercial success. Five of their six albums have gone gold, and their latest, *Aja*, is well on its way.



Jazz is on fire again, with new electronic sparks and smokin' beat. Not since the heyday of New Orleans in the Twenties has such mass excitement flamed around this native American sound. Keyboard stars **Chick Corea** and **Herbie Hancock** top the pop charts with electrifying blends of traditional jazz virtuosity and futuristic electronics. Their goal, says Corea, is to bring new jazz awareness "to as many people as possible." It's working. Jazz albums are selling 10 times more than in 1970, pop record stores have doubled or tripled their number of jazz bins, and colleges report a run on elective jazz courses.

Stevie Wonder and other high-rolling rock stars have caught the jazz fever, too. On his blockbuster album, *Songs in the Key of Life*, Wonder bares a jazz-inspired soul. One of his hottest cuts, "Sir Duke," shouts the praises of Duke Ellington and the everlasting joys of the jazz greats. Roll over Duke Ellington and tell Louis Armstrong the news.



Miles Davis: His horn announced a new jazz age

SOUND SAMPLER

George Benson: *Breezin'* • **Blood, Sweat & Tears:** *Blood, Sweat & Tears* • **Chicago:** *Chicago X* • **Chick Corea:** *Hymn of the Seventh Galaxy* • **The Crusaders:** *Free as the Wind* • **Miles Davis:** *Bitches Brew* • **Herbie Hancock:** *Headhunters* • **Bob James:** *Heads* • **Al Jarreau:** *Look to the Rainbow* • **Ronnie Laws:** *Pressure Sensitive* • **John McLaughlin:** *Birds of Fire* • **Flora Purim:** *Open Your Eyes You Can Fly* • **Steely Dan:** *Aja* • **Grover Washington, Jr.:** *Mister Magic* • **Weather Report:** *Mysterious Traveller*



The Songbird

Open Your Eyes You Can Fly, the 1975 solo album by **Flora Purim**, is an apt title for the songbird who has unseated Ella Fitzgerald and Roberta Flack in most jazz polls as top female vocalist. Purim spices jazz with the African-based samba rhythms of her native Rio de Janeiro streets—and a spectacular, wide-ranging voice.

The Dance Sound

Jazz pianist **Herbie Hancock** won new listeners in 1973 with a pioneering jazz-rock album, *Headhunters*, that has sold close to one million copies. On that album and the more recent *Man-Child*, Hancock takes jazz improvisation on the synthesizer and electric piano and makes it



danceable with rhythms influenced both by early Africa and latter-day funk.

Roots

A blast of horns announced the marriage of rock and jazz in the late Sixties. In 1968 two rock groups—**Blood, Sweat & Tears** and **Chicago**—appeared with horn sections added to the usual stable of hard rock instruments. When their gold-record brass wailed, it was in a jazz style popularized 20 years earlier during the big band rages of Count Basie and Stan Kenton. In 1969 trumpeter **Miles Davis** and disciples **Herbie Hancock**, **John McLaughlin** and **Chick Corea** plugged their jazz instruments into rock's electric amps and steady beats. Their *Bitches Brew* album became the first jazz hit on the pop charts, and set the tone of jazz rock for the Seventies.