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Herbie Hancock

Jazz Daddies

Veterans Hancock, Latarski highlight Father's Day weekend

Herbie Hancock exemplifies the title of one of his biggest hits: chameleon. During his four-plus decade career at the forefront of jazz, Hancock has created compelling music in the post-bop idiom that he and other artists pioneered on Blue Note in the 1960s, including such classics as "Watermelon Man" and Debussy-influenced works like "Maiden Voyage"; in '70s jazz funk like the classic *Headhunters* album (derided by the jazz police but an important connection between jazz and pop music); in '80s proto-techno like "Rockit" (part of an ongoing fascination with music technology, including his beloved Macs); in world music experiments such as his Mwandishi recordings and duets with Foday Musa Suso; and in various jazz and pop fusions throughout the past two decades. From the beginning of his career in the 1960s on those Blue Note masterpieces and his critical role in Miles Davis's second great quintet, Hancock has collaborated with some of jazz's greatest masters: Chick Corea, Wayne Shorter, Michael Brecker ... it's a long, star-studded list.

The 67-year-old yet ever-youthful Hancock returns to the Hult Center on June 17 with a new electric quartet featuring another generation of diverse virtuosi whose wide range of skills and experience allow him to play highlights from throughout his variegated career. Bassist (and occasional vocalist) Nathan East has played with pop and rock stars such as Bob Dylan, Michael Jackson, Peter Gabriel, Barbara Streisand and a long stint with Eric Clapton. He also anchors the smooth jazz combo Fourplay but is certainly capable of transcending that formula. Drummers have regarded Vinnie Colaiuta as a demigod since his extended partnerships with Frank Zappa and Sting, not to mention work with Joni Mitchell and many others. Benin-born guitarist Lionel Loueke adds a distinct African influence and digital loops. Drawing on his original compositions from the last four decades, Hancock will likely deploy laptops, synthesizers large and small and acoustic piano on occasionally extended jazz-funk fusion extravaganzas. Still funky after all these years, he's still a great keyboard player and innovator, and he puts on a show that any fan of improvised music should see.

One of Eugene's own jazz masters, **Don Latarski**, throws a CD release party at

Luna on June 16 to celebrate his eleventh disk, *Don Latarski & Rue D' Acoustic*. Latarski formed his first combo while in music school at the UO three decades ago; he's headed the school's guitar studies program for years and has literally written the book — actually, 19 of them — on how to play guitar. His colleagues include bassist Mark Schneider, who, like Latarski, has been playing his instrument since the mid-'60s, and veteran drummer Jason Palmer. The trio has been holding court at Oregon Electric Station for years, and Latarski has developed a distinctive and appealing style that somehow sounds natural and cohesive despite incorporating blues, rock, funk, American folk, classical and even world music influences. Their breezy new disk is an ideal summer album, bounding from straight rock backbeats to jazzy polyrhythms, brawny blues to folky finger-style finesse. It's one of the best jazz albums I've heard this year, but of course there's nothing like the live experience of hearing such spontaneously inventive musicians.

Eugene's **Reeble Jar** is a beneficiary of the efforts of Herbie Hancock and other fusion pioneers to incorporate rock and funk elements into jazz. Maybe some purists wouldn't even call the septet's music jazz at all, but who cares about such artificial categories? Certainly not the great musicians, from Ellington to Hancock to Frisell and beyond, who've focused more on expanding possibilities than fitting pigeonholes. The group (didgeridoo, harmonica, guitar, sax, keyboard, bass, drums) plays upbeat, danceable instrumental music with grooves that will be familiar to anyone who's heard the jam band/jazz fusions created over the past decade or so by groups like Medeski Martin & Wood and many others. Jam and jazz fans alike can check them out at the WOW Hall on June 16.

The UO closes another fine musical season with the usual pair of especially attractive concerts on June 10. At 2 pm in room 198 of the UO music school, the **University and Oregon Percussion Ensembles** join mallets to play music by Darius Milhaud, Bang on a Can's David Lang and more. And at 5 pm, the ever-popular **University Gospel Ensemble, Gospel Choir and Gospel Singers** combine with guest stars (including some alumni) to bid farewell to director Cedric Weary. **CW**

EUGENE Weekly **MCDONALD THEATRE**

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