

# ... expressions of a struggle

## Herbie Hancock—"cosmic, earthy"

Fay Mitchell  
Staff Writer

A man at the acoustic piano totally absorbed in his music. His head slumped over the keyboard as his hands made love to the keys. Herbie Hancock on stage in Memorial Hall on April 8. Not just an entertainer, but an artist.

Perhaps he seeks to refine his music to a science, having majored in engineering before changing to music composition at Grenell College in Iowa.

He was born in Chicago, and now lives in Los Angeles. That night in Chapel Hill, Herbie and Headhunters, his band, used strings, reeds, and percussions to produce electricity.

Pink lighting drenched Herbie while he played a mellow round piano solo from his album, "Maiden Voyage." He smiled contentedly to himself and pounded the keys so rapidly the eyes could not distinguish the motions.

From the solo he melted into a jazz improvisation number, "100% Proof" from the "Thrust" album, with Headhunters playing around, over, under and through his lead.

"It's a special honor for me to play the acoustic piano," Herbie explained. That was apparent and appreciable.

Hancock had no monopoly on showing the instrument who was master, as Headhunters displayed brilliance on their own. Several selections from their recently released album, "Survival of the Fittest," provided them opportunity to display their skills.

Blackbird, the guitarist, found playing not challenging enough, so incorporated guitar caesthenics. He held the front neck with his left hand, or played with the guitar slung low on his side, or played with his teeth. Something reptilian tinted his motions



Herbie Hancock

as he continuously reeled before the microphone.

On reeds, Benny Mack alternated between a mellow tenor saxophone, tight soprano saxophone, and tenderly tense flute. He has recorded an album independently, and is talented enough to make it on his own.

Most of the lead singing was done by Paul Jackson in a soothing baritone. He also played bass guitar and was very intently involved in the steady or syncopated rhythms they played.

Mike Clark impressively mastered the drums, and kept pace in providing effect and depth in the rapid switch of rhythms Headhunters employed.

Over in the rear left corner, Bill Simmons had a world of his own. Modestly introduced as the

percussion man, Simmons not only played the congos and a couple of other African drums, but had several banges, clangers, and other paraphernalia that defies description. He was a sound department in himself.

Gourds and cowbells are old hat, perhaps to Simmons passe. He used something similar to a tightly strung bow, teased with a gourd to produce a sharp tense effect. Then he beat on what looked like a mini-miniature double bar sail support, and clacked something similar to inverted wooden curling irons with handles. He even had a rack of metal clangers hanging behind the congos to be used at his discretion.

After introducing "God Make Me Funky," their single release, Headhunters got into some fine

frantic jamming. Hancock can be proud of his hand picked band.

Hancock returned and they played a couple of hybrid jazz numbers from "Thrust" and "Headhunters," when they decided to slow things down.

"Y'all ready for something pretty? We're going to play something pretty, something to bring out the perspiration of love," Hancock said.

"This is dedicated to the ladies, and it's named for an insect. You may wonder how can a romantic song be named for an insect... This insect is very beautiful," the married Arian concluded, as the band played "Butterfly."

Of course, no Hancock concert is complete without "Chamelon." The overflow crowd rejoiced and rocked through the rest of the concert.

"I prefer playing college campuses because college students have a lot of energy, it helps the spirit of the music. College students are eager to enjoy themselves," Hancock related.

"My audiences are generally 18-30 years old. Usually college students are my audience. I used to play head music, all into the cosmic, now I play more earthy, into the... too."

Hancock has done two movie scores, for "Blowup" and "Death Wish." He likes working with large orchestras, and would like to do more movie scenes.

Several factors have influenced Hancock's musical development, including Miles Davis, Chic Corea, Sly Stone, and James Brown.

"I studied classical piano. I like Ravell, love Stravensky, and some electronic music."

He also feels influenced by Nichiren Shoshu, a form of Buddhism. He and Headhunters meditate every day, and repeat a chant.

"My meditation helped me in coming to the kind of music I'm doing now. I've only been in three years. Check me 10 years from now. I'm going to be bad."



Alex Haley

Alex Haley, co-author of "The Autobiography of Malcolm X," spoke on April 11, in Memorial Hall as part of the Black Arts Cultural Festival. He is now completing a book on the oral history of a black family, and how he traced his family back to his African ancestors. This symbolic story of a black man rediscovering his roots is a true story about Haley. The book, "Root," is already being considered for a seven-part TV series.



Picnickers enjoy food, drink and the Tobacco Road Movement Band at the second annual BSM picnic.