

Herbie Hancock ended a five-year tenure with Miles Davis' group in 1968 after playing on Davis' legendary *In a Silent Way*. In 1969 he turned heads in the jazz community by taking his own sextet that had recorded the largely-acoustic *The Prisoner* earlier in the year, switching labels and releasing an almost straight-up electric funk album, the underrated *Fat Albert Rotunda*. In 1970 he retooled his sextet and set out to continue the fusion of electronics and rock with jazz and the general expansion of the parameters of the jazz idiom that he and Miles Davis had begun with *In A Silent Way*. The first product of this ambition, *Mwandishi*, is a great success.

While Hancock has moved from style to style over the course of his long career, he usually left behind a discernable trail. Thus, although this album is a certainly a departure from *The Prisoner*, it is not an about-face. Electric now are the bass and the keyboards (with some occasional guitar), but acoustic horns and reeds remain. The overall feel of the music is funky, yet an air of melancholy pervades. The mood is usually gentle yet there is also a restless probing at work, pushing at the edges. Solos are out, as there aren't any chords to solo over. Bringing a group aesthetic to his vision is what Hancock was aiming for here, and potential listeners put off by "wankery" would do well to investigate this album.

The lead track, "Ostinato," is built around funky 15/4 rhythm which is held for its 13-minute entirety. It sounds like a deconstruction of *Fat Albert Rotunda* taking place underwater. "You'll Know When You Get There" is probably Hancock's most graceful moment on record with this particular sextet and is a perfect example of how Hancock was able to lend significant emotional content to even his most heady experiments. Hancock's rippling Fender Rhodes colors the quieter parts of "Wandering Spirit Song," a masterful execution of tension and release. The curious flugelhorn and trombone parts at the beginning convey the experience of a swim through a coral reef; the crescendos are like succumbing to a whirlpool.

review by Matt P. – Feb 3 2005

Herbie Hancock

Live Mwandishi 1971

Nice, France July 21, 1971

Ex FM broadcast stereo

Herbie Hancock Live Mwandishi 1971

Naughty Dog

1. You'll Know When You Get There 21.17m
2. Toys 23.18m
3. Ostinato [Suite for Angela] or Be What 18.55m

Time 63.34m

With Herbie Hancock - piano
Buster Williams - bass
Billy Hart - drums
Eddie Henderson - trumpet
Bennie Maupin - sax, flute, bass clarinet
Julian Prester - trombone
Leon Chancler - percussion

Trade Freely. Not For Sale.



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