arts

Herbie and company kept Rec Hall jumping

By PAT GRANDJEAN
Collegian Arts Writer

With the exuberant shout "Selah, State College!!" David Hinds, lead singer for the band Steel Pulse, kicked off a night of music at Rec Hall that those present won't soon forget.

concert review

Of course, the headliners for Saturday evening's concert were Herbie Hancock and the Rockit Band, who found themselves playing to a nearly full house — and one of the most racially integrated audiences one is likely to see in State College.

Neither act had to struggle to win audience approval, as the majority of the audience seemed firmly in their corner from the beginning. However, there's no doubt that due to the high overall quality of their performances, both bands made firm fans out of a number of borderline cases, such as myself.

In particular, Hancock's set was a revelation. Long viewed as one of our more inventive jazz-rock fusioneers, Hancock has nonetheless seemed to have a hard time getting a truly gritty, tough sound down on record. Even the new wave/funk influenced tracks on the album *Future Shock*, which make one feel as if they should rightly come out of the speakers and *lean* on you, don't seem to have the bite they need to put them across.

This weakness was obliterated in concert. With his seven-man band and musical equipment that ranged from the 600-year-old kora to tomorrow's latest in high-tech, Hancock made music that came nearly as close as live music can to storming Heaven.

Most of the pieces performed came from his brand new album *Sound System*, an attempt to extend the *Future Shock* concept to encompass Third World musical styles. Selections incorporating this idea were "Sound-System," during which the Rockit band sounded like a 2,000 member steel-drum outfit, and "Karabali," a Caribbean-inflected piece featuring warm keyboard improvisations by Hancock himself.

Heavily featured was the futuristic jazz-funk that forms the core of all of Hancock's recent work. "Metal Beats" and "Hard Rock" were real scorchers built on "Rockit"-style progressions, which showcased the talents of virtuoso *scratchmeister* D.St. (who, for my money, is a damned sight more inventive than Grandmaster Melle Mel). "Rockit" itself was given a brilliant build-up by D.St., who began with a call-and-response rap that had everyone on their feet, then lit into a spacey synth-scratch bridge before plunging the band into a version of the song complete with dancing video dummies.

Bernard Fowler, band vocalist and clearly their most glamorous personality, had his solo-spectacular turns as well, providing a strong song-and-dance performance on "Future Shock." His vocals on "Stars in Your Eyes" (dedicated by Hancock to "those who have romantic hearts") was less effective, but redeemed by a climactic leap from the stage to a perch in the front row.

More striking than the performance — and in dramatic contrast to its complexity — was Hancock's onstage demeanor. Eminently affable — I don't think I've seen anyone who seems so easygoing in concert — he gave the impression of a man half his age (he's 44) who is just now getting turned on by all of the possibilities of music and realizing how much he has to learn.

Particularly touching was his introduction of the "newest member" of the Rockit band, Foday Musa Suso, who hails from Gambia, West Africa. Hancock seemed as awkward as the guy next door as he related with a touch of awe that Suso's ancestors had invented the 600 year-old kora, an instrument that looked like an enormous electrified mandolin.

Called back by standing ovation and audience cries of "Her-bie!!!", the band's encore was a blistering rendition of Hancock's "Chameleon," updated with a much heavier beat and featuring a fantastic keyboard interlude.

As for Steel Pulse, they clearly fulfilled the role of an opening act above and beyond the call of duty. In fact, they came painfully close to stealing the night from under Hancock's nose with leader David Hinds hard-rocking reggae songs. While promising, in his words, to provide the audience with a lesson in "reggaetology," what they really provided was a course in social ecology that you can dance to. And dance the audience did — particularly in the bleachers, where they seemed to grow in numbers with every song.

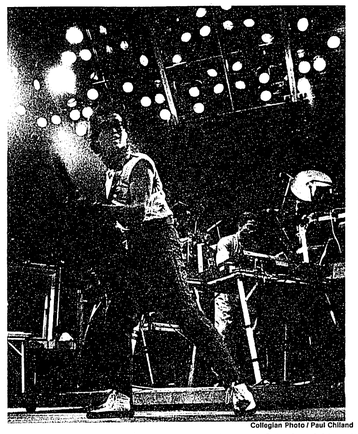
The members of Steel Pulse were great comic actors as well as musical performers, whether mugging for the audience and the cameras (as bassist Ronald McQueen did persistently) or dancing across the stage, playing off each other. They were also the epitome of sartorial charm, from Hinds' shades and dreadlocks (that seem to defy gravity) to McQueen's baseball cap. Just call them the Coasters of reggae.

They owed their musical success as much to the sharp keyboard work of Selwyn Brown and the rock solid drumming of Stevie Nesbitt as to the songs themselves. And the songs that seemed most wonderful were those drawn from their latest album, *Earth Crisis*, particularly "Bodyguard" and the well-known "Steppin' Out." But for me, the real high point was the song that began with Hinds' plaintive introduction, "We love you so much. . .so much we love you. . .that the question is, 'Who shall save the human race?'" The band's musicianship and general good will likewise earned them a standing ovation and demands for an encore.

On the whole, the show was enhanced by the overall excellence of its coordination in musicianship, lighting and choreography. It's hard to think of many concerts where the musicians have seemed so attuned to each other and those backstage have seemed so attuned to the needs of the performers. Kudos to the University Concert Committee.

Collegian Photo / Paul Chiland

Was the show that much of an electrifying experience? No, guitarist David Hinds of Steel Pulse had his hair like this before the show, but Saturday's performances by this group and Herbie Hancock with his Rockit Band left a lot of people feeling high. Steel Pulse is a British reggae group that dazzled the Rec Hall audience with its great playing and comical actions.


Collegian Photo / Paul Chiland

Rockin' on and on describes the Herbie Hancock concert Saturday night, and that's how the audience would have liked it — non-stop music all night long. Hancock's personality helped captivate the audience, as well as the expert musicianship of his Rockit Band, including the multi-talented keyboardist, Anton Fier.

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R053 325

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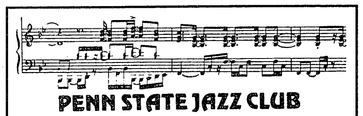
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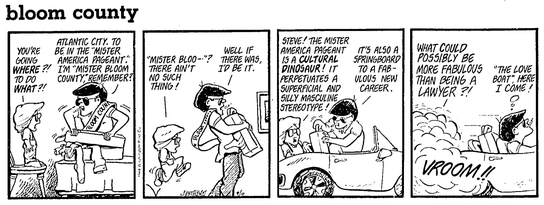

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Across

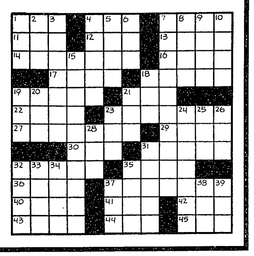
1 Space walk
4 Norse county
7 Concha
11 Thole
12 Old make of car
13 Caffein-rich nut
14 Meantime
16 Bills and ____
17 Distant
18 Cap
19 Thralls
21 Trouble
22 Buddhist sacred mountain
23 Entity
27 Italian region
29 Harangue
30 John: Scottish
31 Witch ____
32 Overture
35 Total admission receipts
36 Grebe
37 Assegai
40 Secular
41 Hurrah in Madric
42 Card game
43 Colleague
44 Fruit of horseradish
45 Complete

Down

1 Spire ornament
2 Wine
3 Star in Scorpia
4 Tapestry
5 Golda ____
6 Actor Poston
7 Expedite
8 Insufficient
9 Wild plum
10 Direction
15 Competence
18 Snaffle
19 Bribe
20 Rattle
21 Some
23 Caravansary
24 Antelope
25 Dusk
26 Electrical unit
28 Rhine tributary
31 Port
32 Earthen jar
33 Young horse
34 Fencing sword
35 Hurricane
37 Chore
38 Electric particle
39 Salute

Crossword

(answers in Tuesday's classifieds)



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UNIVERSITY CALENDAR
Monday, September 10

Comp. Lit. Luncheon, 12:15 p.m., 101 Kern.
Association of Residence Hall Students meeting, 6:30 p.m., Room 225 HUB.
Vietnamese Student Association meeting, 7 p.m., Room 307 Boucke.
PA Legal Society meeting, 7 p.m., Room 267 Willard.
Amateur Radio Club meeting, 7 p.m., Room 318 Willard.
O.T.I.S. meeting, 7 p.m., Room 307 HUB.
PSU Ad Club meeting, 7:30 p.m. Room 217 Willard.

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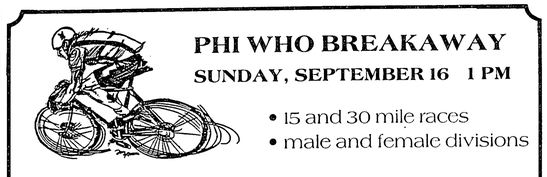
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Introducing University Health Services	September 10	4:30 p.m.	Ritenour Health Ctr.
Self-Directed Learning: Putting What You Know to Work for You in Your Academic Program Planning	September 11	7:00 p.m.	321 HUB
Jobs for Human Development Majors	September 11	4:00 p.m.	HUB Assembly Hall
Jobs for Business Majors	September 12	4:00 p.m.	HUB Assembly Hall
Study Starters	September 12	8:00 p.m.	320 HUB
Jobs for Engineering Majors	September 13	4:00 p.m.	HUB Assembly Hall

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All interested persons who are knowledgeable in black-and-white photography should attend a screening night at 7:30 p.m. Sept. 12 in 101 Carnegie. Please bring a pen and five examples of your work as a photographer. Work should represent your best efforts and show something of your style.

Further questions can be answered by calling the photo editor at 865-1828.