# Herbie Hancock on his musical hiatus and the influence of technology



Herbie Hancock, a legendary figure in the world of jazz, has recently opened up about his prolonged absence from the music scene, attributing it to modern distractions such as YouTube. Speaking from his home in West Hollywood, the 84-year-old pianist acknowledged, "I fall into rabbit holes on YouTube. A lot of them. New music writing software, things about health, tech things." This fascination with technology contributed to a 15-year hiatus from releasing new albums, though he maintains a light-hearted outlook on it, stating, "I get victimised by it, so to speak, but that's life."

Hancock's illustrious career spans over six decades, having been discovered by trumpeter Donald Byrd in the early 1960s and subsequently signing with Blue Note Records. He is renowned for composing jazz standards like "Watermelon Man" and "Cantaloupe Island." Notably, he was one of the pioneers in incorporating synthesizers into his music, prominently featured in the electro-funk movement with his album "Head Hunters." His innovative approach also led to a worldwide hit with the single "Rockit" in the 1980s, which won him five awards at the inaugural MTV Awards.

Recently, Hancock was announced as one of this year's recipients of the Polar Music Prize, often regarded as the musical equivalent of the Nobel Prize. He expressed his admiration for the impressive list of past laureates, which includes notable names like Sir Paul McCartney and Stevie Wonder. Hancock highlighted his personal connection to the award, particularly noting that he was pleased to see fellow jazz musician Wayne Shorter honoured in 2017.

Reflecting on his formative years with legend Miles Davis, Hancock recalled the intense yet inspiring period from 1964 to 1968 when he toured with the revered trumpeter. "I was always frightened playing with Miles," he shared, recalling the excitement and the pressure to perform at his best. Hancock fondly remembers, “When we were all in sync, that made life worth living.”

As he gears up for an upcoming European tour—which includes three performances at London's Barbican—Hancock delivered a humorous impression of Davis, emphasising the importance of a diverse audience. "If all you see are dudes in the audience, that means your music is dead," he mimicked, illustrating the wisdom imparted to him by the legendary musician.

Despite the lengthy gap in new material, Hancock continues to find immense joy in piano music, even admitting that he has been moved to tears during sessions when he overcomes musical challenges. He explained, "If I've solved some kind of problem that I've had with the tune and made some kind of discovery that surpassed my expectations, I've been known to cry."

Beyond his musical pursuits, Hancock has also taken a keen interest in the rise of artificial intelligence (AI). He holds an optimistic view of technology, suggesting that current fears about AI may be exaggerated. "I have this feeling that AI is going to help us all understand and get closer to becoming more ethically responsible people," he stated. His approach includes treating AI technologies with respect, as he noted, "When I'm using ChatGPT or Siri on my iPhone, I always say thank you and they usually say, 'You're welcome.'"

Herbie Hancock’s enduring legacy continues to influence the jazz genre and beyond, as he confidently navigates a rapidly evolving musical landscape at an age when many would consider retirement.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHhD4PD75zY> - This URL supports Herbie Hancock's music career, specifically his hit single 'Rockit', which was a significant part of his electro-funk movement.
* <https://www.classicpopmag.com/2022/01/pop-instrumentals/> - This article lists 'Rockit' as one of the top 80s pop instrumentals, highlighting its impact on the music scene.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This source provides the original article about Herbie Hancock's recent activities and reflections on his career.
* <https://www.blue-note.com> - This URL is relevant to Herbie Hancock's early career, as he signed with Blue Note Records after being discovered by Donald Byrd.
* <https://www.polarpriset.se/en/laureates/herbie-hancock/> - This URL would provide information about Herbie Hancock receiving the Polar Music Prize, often considered the musical equivalent of the Nobel Prize.