

Convocation hall filled to capacity

John McLaughlin's music was simply amazing



John Oughton photo

The Mahavishnu Orchestra led by John McLaughlin played to a packed Convocation Hall last week. Reviewer Oughton says they played

some of the best jazz Toronto has heard in a long time. The music was intricate but it all came together in a beautiful sound.

By JOHN OUGHTON
Last Friday night Convocation Hall hosted one of the best jazz concerts Toronto has heard. The Mahavishnu Orchestra communicated with each other and the audience in a way few groups ever approach. Mahavishnu John McLaughlin opened the concert by asking for silence, which he almost got from the capacity crowd. After that the music was, quite simply, amazing.


McLaughlin's brilliant guitar playing on a combination six and twelve string electric guitar is far from being the group's only strength. Jerry Goodman's unique electric violin techniques are only equalled in the rock-jazz field by Jean-Luc Ponty — he played what must be one of the first rock guitar solos ever executed on a violin. Keyboard man Jan Hammer is consistently interesting on electric piano, and is making increasing use of a synthesizer in performance. The rhythm section, Billy Cobham on drums and Rick Laird on bass, supply more than background beats.

Anyone unfortunate enough to miss the concert can approximate the experience by getting the Orchestra's new album *Birds of Fire*. The record is quite close in tone and spirit to last year's *The Inner Mounting Flame*.

McLaughlin's interest in the philosophy and music is evidently a major source of the record's beauty. Long, complex rhythmic patterns which suddenly resolve into soaring notes are a Mahavishnu speciality, as are the droning, harmonically rich textures of the guitar, violin and keyboards together. "Together" in the more than superficial sense is really the best word to describe the album and its effect. You can't always tell which instrument is playing what — there's no overpowering ego in it, musically or otherwise. They play life and faith and feelings and still maintain a sense of humour.

Staff meeting today at 1 p.m. New staff are very welcome. Come to room 111, Central Square

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