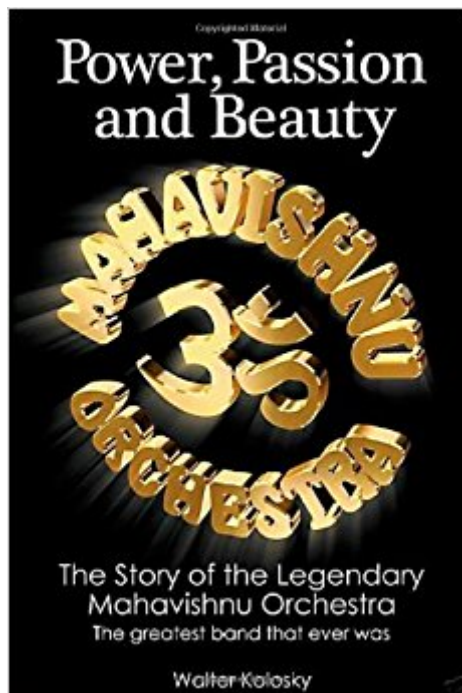


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Power, Passion & Beauty: The Story Of The Legendary Mahavishnu Orchestra



Synopsis

Starting in 1971 and lasting in one form or another for five years, the Mahavishnu Orchestra exploded onto the popular music scene while simultaneously trashing all existing conventions, forging a new direction that is still controversial to this day. The loudest and fastest band in the entire world, the MO literally could 'scare' people - yet also could create music of great beauty. All five members of the original band: John McLaughlin, Billy Cobham, Jan Hammer, Jerry Goodman and Rick Laird cooperated with the author. In addition, over 100 people, including some of the world's greatest musicians and artists, provide comments exclusive to this book. Among those commenting for the book are Herbie Hancock, Pat Metheny, Jeff Beck, Sir George Martin, Jean-Luc Ponty, Peter Max, Joe Zawinul, Bill Frisell, Dennis Chambers, Bill Bruford, Peter Erskine, Jimmy Herring, Jonas Hellborg, Mark Egan, John Scofield, Steve Lukather, Lyle Mays, Steve Morse, Joey DeFrancesco, Narada Michael Walden and many, many more. Stuart Nicholson for Jazzwise magazine says, '...I enjoyed this book. It's a good read and communicates the real significance of one of jazz's great ensembles.' Bloomberg News' Paul Goguen (Host of Bloomberg Muse) says Power, Passion and Beauty, '...is skillfully researched and assembled from the band's formation to its demise. It is a must read for any Mahavishnu or music fan.' Colin Harper of Mojo Magazine writes: '...definitively researched - and page-turning account - from conception to destruction to a kind of resurrection. Forget about punk: this is 403 chords and the truth.' The Boston Phoenix says that Power, Passion and Beauty is, 'an entertaining ride.'

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Customer Reviews

A most enjoyable read, Walter knows more about the MO than I do and I was the bass player! The facts are covered and there are bios of each of the members prior to the formation of the band along with interviews from Pat Metheny, Herbie Hancock and many others, plus some great photos. If you were a MO fan, you've got to read this book.

Due to the extensive and detailed research, this book is a must-read for any die-hard MO fan; but be prepared to slog through some lame prose. Positives: Due to the paucity of information that has been available on the MO in the past, the depth and variety of insights that Kolosky has collected in this book are both astounding and riveting. The interviews with the band members are particularly great to read. The book humanizes every member, and does a good job of showing how each of them brought different talents, perspectives and insecurities that led to both the brilliance and the eventual demise of the group. I felt confident that Kolosky has left no stone unturned in his quest to illuminate us as to exactly what made the MO so great. Negatives: I LOVE, LOVE, LOVE the MO, and can honestly say that their music has affected my life more than any other art I have ever encountered. But even I was put off by Kolosky's simpering fanboy tone. While the research is meticulous and impressive, the quality of the writing made the book an absolute drudge to read. A biased, reverent tone is welcome, as are some personal thoughts; but Kolosky often intrudes on the story, digressing and generally mucking it up with his opinions and self-indulgence. You're going to have to be a VERY dedicated fan to make it through.

Being an ardent Mahavishnu fan, I could not wait to read what I thought would be an inside look into the band's genius. Boy was I disappointed. In short, the book substantially consists of the author's gushing (to the point of distraction) about how great the band is and quotes from various musicians discussing the first time they heard the band and how great the band is. I'm sorry, but I could not care less to hear about how great the band is from other musicians. I already know the band is great. I get it. Why do I need to read page after page about the first time the author heard the band and what the band means to him? I was hoping to gain insight and detail into how the music was created and a personal look into the minds that created it. It would also have been nice to get a glimpse into the inner conflicts that plagued the band, but the author, obviously ga ga over the band, appeared afraid to travel down that path or say anything that might even remotely be controversial. There is nothing revealed in this book that any fan would not otherwise know except maybe details concerning the font the band used. In short, this is a very superficial read about a complex and important musical group.

The good news is you have to agree with most of Kolosky's conclusions regarding the place of the MO in the history of music. They remain unique, spanning the improvisation of jazz, the compositional sensibility of classicism, the rhythmic variation of Indian music and the energy and power of Rock. The bad news is Kolosky's methodology and his own limitations prevent a completely satisfying book. The book consists almost entirely of interviews, which in and of itself is not a problem. but in telling the story Kolosky doesn't always ask the right questions. He does effectively trace the careers of the key participants and the interviews provide a wealth of anecdotal information detailing the short life of the Mo, but his lack of technical knowledge leave us still guessing at the processes that created this unique band, its triumphs and limitations.

Some other reviewers have noted this: this book is written by a true fan, not a musicologist. It consists largely of gushing about the Mahavishnu Orchestra. There is very little insight or analysis or critique or intelligence. Just non-stop gushing about how phenomenal the MO was. And it's true: they were phenomenal. I was there. I remember it well. And I saw them in concert, and yes, it was a spiritual experience of sorts. But that doesn't mean that an entire book devoted to the group should consist of non-stop gushing. That said, there's nothing else available on the MO. So, this book remains the only one out there on the MO. So it's still worth a read. Just don't expect the book to be phenomenal, because it isn't.

From the first time I heard MO on Don Kirschner's Rock Concert so many years ago until now I've been hooked. I have followed each member's career and personal life as much as I could. John is my absolute favorite musician of all time. Billy, Jan, Jerry, and Rick are every bit as important to me in so many ways as to be countless. To say the music spoke to me then and still does now is true. To read quotes from others who feel the same as me is always exciting. To hear my own thoughts expressed more eloquently than is possible for me is humbling. The Mahavishnu Orchestra music has been, is and always will be a part of my life. This music was "instrumental" (no pun intended) in helping me form my spiritual views as well as being pleasant for ME to listen to, although I've managed to alienate a few folks by listening to it. Oh, well... their loss...LOL... Anyhow, it was a wonderful read and very informative and interesting to me.

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