

## **FUSION era**

Fusion. The very word conjures up images of a type of bonding between two or more elements. Indeed, this bonding between forms of music is exactly what happens in the jazz idiom of Fusion.

“Fusion” was named after the blending of jazz with rock (with more than a dollop of funk thrown in), a mixture that eventually hit a brick wall. The rhythmic bases of the two styles were incompatible, but there is no denying that many creative musicians found the genre enticing.”  
(credit: Schoenberg, Loren: Fusion Style)

The fusion idiom, then, is a combination of jazz and rock. However, we aren't just talking any kind of rock. Hard driving funk serves as the basis for the rhythm section, while the harmonies and melodies of earlier (or newer or brand new) jazz tunes create the “fused” effect.

The mid 1960s or early 1970s marked the beginning of the popularity of Fusion as a genre of jazz; fusion music is still being made today (dates: approx. 1965 – present).

Miles Davis was probably the one main instigator for the initial appeal of Fusion. This is why he is the featured artist for the fusion era.

Indeed, the fusion era continues well into end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and beyond.

## **FEATURED FUSION ERA COMPOSER: MILES DAVIS (1926-1991)**

An original, lyrical soloist and a demanding group leader, Miles Davis was the most consistently innovative musician in jazz from the late 1940s through the 1960s. Davis grew up in East St. Louis, and took up trumpet at the age of 13; two years later he was already playing professionally. He moved to New York in September 1944, ostensibly to enter the Institute of Musical Art but actually to locate his idol, Charlie Parker. He joined Parker in live appearances and recording sessions (1945-8), at the same time playing in other groups and touring in the big bands.

For years Davis, who trained as a boxer, had always been physically equal to the exertions of playing jazz trumpet; however, in the mid-1970s serious ailments and the effects of an automobile accident obliged him to retire. He suffered for five years from pneumonia and other afflictions. But in 1980 he made new recordings, and in the summer of 1981 began to tour extensively with new quintets and sextets. Although he was incapacitated by a stroke in February 1982, he resumed an active career in the spring of that year. In the 1980s Davis was described as a "living legend," a title he detested because it went against his continuing inclination to be associated with new popular music and energetic youthful activities, but one that was nonetheless accurate, reflecting his position as the former partner of both Parker and Coltrane. He received an honorary Doctorate of Music from the New England Conservatory in 1986 in honor of his longstanding achievements.