



## KENDRICK SCOTT

### HERBIE HANCOCK'S DIVERSE DRUMMER

KENDRICK SCOTT HAS BEEN INFATUATED WITH JAZZ HISTORY for the better part of his 28 years. But as a young jazz virtuoso, he sometimes regrets being born too late to have rubbed shoulders with jazz's founders.

"Not too long ago," laments the New York-based drummer, "if Art Blakey was playing, you'd see Joe Jones, Max Roach, and Jack DeJohnette at the club. Billy Eckstine and Freddie Hubbard would be there, too. One of the unfortunate things in jazz is that a lot of the original greats are gone."

But Scott's current gig is a direct conduit to jazz history: He's been touring with keyboardist/composer Herbie Hancock, whose ceaseless innovation extends from the Miles Davis 1963 landmark *Seven Steps to Heaven* to the recent GRAMMY-winning *River: The Joni Letters*.

"I learn so much every night from Herbie," says Kendrick. "He's kicking everybody's butt, playing three-hour shows every night. It's amazing!"



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The Hancock songbook ranges from classic jazz to rock, from fusion to funk. Yet Scott tries not to regard these as separate styles. “Sometimes,” he notes, “you get in trouble if you polarize yourself or move too far to one style. I don’t try to be a ‘funk drummer’ or a ‘jazz drummer’—I just take what I do and apply it to everything. Herbie inspires me that way. Even when we play the simplest funk groove, he’s always Herbie. He’s still exploring, still playing open.”

Reared in a musical family in Houston, Texas, Scott was drumming by age six. “My mother played the piano and was the church choir director,” he explains. “There was a plethora of drummers in Houston, and a great one, Eric Porter, played at my church. After church, I would run up to the drums and try to bang them. He would give me two sticks and say, ‘Show me what you got!’ Then I would go home and beat on stuff. I turned one of those little orange Halloween baskets upside down, and that was my snare drum. I used shoe boxes for toms, and records for cymbals. One day my mom heard the noise. I thought I was going to get in trouble because of the records, but she bought me a drum pad, and then a kit. And that started it all.”

By the time Kendrick attended Houston’s High School of Performing and Visual Arts, he’d discovered jazz. “There were a lot of great musicians in my school, and they were all playing jazz,” he says. “The music just touched me, really deeply. By the time I was fourteen, I knew I was going to be a professional drummer.”

While attending Boston’s Berklee College of Music, Kendrick worked his way through the history of jazz drumming, with a special interest in early drum innovators such as Baby Dodds, Chick Webb, and Papa Joe Jones. After graduation, he worked with Blanchard and the Crusaders, and released an album, *The Source*, on his own World Culture Music label.

Scott’s eclecticism informs his choice of drums. “If you tune Yamaha drums the right way,” he says, “you can go in any direction—and on this gig, we go in many different directions. My current touring kit is a Beech Custom in a Purple Sparkle finish. I generally like warm, pretty-sounding drums, but I need some extra volume for the Herbie gig, and I find beech wood to be a great middle point between the punch of maple and the low frequencies of birch. It’s not too bright or too dark. I have a nine-ply bass drum and two nine-ply floor toms. The rack toms are six-ply. I have Nouveau lugs, but I use the older hoops they used to put on the Maple Custom kits. My other main kit is a Habanero Sparkle Absolute Maple Custom Absolute, which has thinner shells. I love that one, too.”

On the road with Hancock, Scott is somehow finding time to compose his next album even while focusing on his enviable gig. “Being around Herbie is a trip,” he says. “Sometimes bandleaders tell you exactly what to play in each section, but Herbie doesn’t give me much direction. He leaves it wide open and trusts you, your musicianship, and what you bring to the music. He doesn’t need to control you. Being around Herbie has opened my eyes to accepting who I am as a person, and then as a musician. His trust builds my confidence. Hopefully, when I’m leading my own band, I can impart that same freedom.”