



Jazz-Rock: A History

Stuart Nicholson

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Over the last three decades, no musical innovation in jazz has been more important than its fusion with rock. The emergence of this genre drove a wedge deep into jazz audiences, dividing them into those that wanted to cling to the acoustic tradition, and those who saw the jazz tradition as one of change. In his wide-ranging study, Stuart Nicholson shows how a marriage between jazz and rock was anticipated and seen as inevitable in the context of its time. His lively text begins by showing how the commercial threat to jazz from the momentous influx of rock bands in the late 1960s came to be a creative influence, with the first rock supergroups - such as Eric Clapton's Cream - made up of jazz calibre players. Nicholson marks Miles Davis's *Bitches Brew* as the pivotal album that defined the genre, with Miles establishing a new style of band that stated its difference through the use of young, talented players from outside the traditional idiom of jazz, a move that shrewdly aligned him with the new. Soon every player, and every jazz record company, was jumping aboard a fast-accelerating bandwagon. But Nicholson argues that commercial excess eventually undid jazz-rock's early promise. Finally, Nicholson shows how such commercialism is far removed from today's avant-garde exponents of a mutated version of jazz-rock, such as John Zorn, Bill Frisell, Bill Laswell and John Scofield. Featuring an exhaustive discography by Jon Newey, *Jazz-Rock: A History* is required reading for music fans of all ages and allegiance, and defines an area of musical history that has until now eluded serious study and attention.

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