



JOHN SCOFIELD

Biography

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John Scofield's guitar work has influenced jazz since the late 70's and is going strong today. Possessor of a very distinctive sound and stylistic diversity, Scofield is a masterful jazz improviser whose music generally falls somewhere between post-bop, funk edged jazz, and R & B.

Born in Ohio and raised in suburban Connecticut, Scofield took up the guitar at age 11, inspired by both rock and blues players. He attended Berklee College of Music in Boston. After a debut recording with Gerry Mulligan and Chet Baker, Scofield was a member of the Billy Cobham-George Duke band for two years. In 1977 he recorded with Charles Mingus, and joined the Gary Burton quartet. He began his international career as a bandleader and recording artist in 1978. From 1982-1985, Scofield toured and recorded with Miles Davis. His Davis stint placed him firmly in the foreground of jazz consciousness as a player and composer.

Since that time he has prominently led his own groups in the international Jazz scene, recorded over 30 albums as a leader (many already classics) including collaborations with contemporary favorites like Pat Metheny, Charlie Haden, Eddie Harris, Medeski, Martin & Wood, Bill Frisell, Brad Mehldau, Mavis Staples, Government Mule, Jack DeJohnette, Joe Lovano and Phil Lesh. He's played and recorded with Tony Williams, Jim Hall, Ron Carter, Herbie Hancock, Joe Henderson, Dave Holland, Terumasa Hino among many jazz legends. Throughout his career Scofield has punctuated his traditional jazz offerings with funk-oriented electric music. All along, the guitarist has kept an open musical mind.

Touring the world approximately 200 days per year with his own groups, he is an Adjunct Professor of Music at New York University, a husband and father of two.

Autobiography by John Scofield **How I Got From There to Here in 704 Easy Words**

When I first got into jazz -- around 1969, I came from playing R&B and Soul in High School. Jazz Rock was in its infancy stage and I was lucky enough to be around to experience the Golden Age of both Rock and Soul and see Jazz embrace that movement while I was trying to learn how to play straightahead Jazz. A lot of my early chances to actually gig were in various Jazz/Rock idioms. I got to play "real" jazz with Gary Burton and Gerry Mulligan but my real first "big time" gig was with the Billy Cobham/George Duke band. We got to play in gigantic concert halls and rock venues for excited people who were not necessarily jazz aficionados, but loved the music.

After that band ended, I stayed home in NYC and worked on playing acoustic jazz with my own groups and people like Dave Liebman. I also started an ongoing musical relationship with bassist Steve Swallow that continues to this day. As a jazz bassist and real songwriter (not just a composer) Swallow has influenced me as much as anyone.

In 1982, I joined the Miles Davis Band, answering the call of funky jazz once again. My stint with Miles made me sure that there really was a kind of music that was both funky and improvised at the same time.

After playing with Miles for over three years and making a few more records of my own, I hooked up with ex-P-Funk drummer Dennis Chambers, and we made a group that really

utilized funk rhythms. Dennis and bassist Gary Grainger were masters of that "James Brown/ Earth Wind and Fire/ 70's thing". It was great having that underneath my tunes.

When I signed with Blue Note Records in 1989, I decided to explore more "swinging" avenues. I got together with my old Berklee School buddy, genius saxophonist Joe Lovano. We had a group and made three albums for Blue Note -- four counting a bootleg from Europe -- that are probably my very best "jazz" endeavors. Part of that can also be attributed to the magnificent drumming of Bill Stewart, who is as good a musician as I've ever met.

Then I felt the urge to get into a soul-jazz thing. I'd been really influenced by the music of Eddie Harris and Les McCann from the sixties. I invited Eddie to guest on the album Hand Jive. This was about the same time that Larry Goldings entered my music on Hammond Organ. With the collective possibilities of these musicians, I began to allow jazz to blend with New Orleans type rhythms to make the music groove.

Around this period, I also worked and recorded some with Pat Metheny -- one of the great guitarists. He and Bill Frisell are my favorite guitar players to play with and listen to. But then there's also Jim Hall and Mike Stern and Jim Hall and John Abercrombie and Jim Hall and Kurt Rosenwinckle and Jim Hall and Peter Bernstein... not to mention Jim Hall. And then there's also Albert King and Carlos Santana and Tom Morello and all the other ones I can't summon the names of right at the moment.

When I heard Medeski, Martin and Wood's record "Shack Man", I knew I had to play with them. They played those swampy grooves and had a free jazz attitude. These guys are serious conceptualists and are able to take the music to beautiful and strange places. I love what they did on AGoGo. In the last couple of years, I've heard some great young players that remind me often of what it is that I like so much about the music of sixties R&B.

Now I'm able to take that music and mix it with jazz all over again. I'm having more fun playing now than I ever have and I feel like I can finally really learn to play the guitar. Now, after having the chance to play with many of my musical idols -- I'm getting inspiration from younger musicians. I'm as excited about writing and playing music as I ever have been.