

The Mahavishnu Orchestra - The Inner Mounting Flame (1971)

Written by bluesever

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A1 Meeting Of The Spirits 6:50 A2 Dawn 5:15 A3 The Noonward Race 6:27 A4 A Lotus On Irish Streams 5:41 B1 Vital Transformation 6:14 B2 The Dance Of Maya 7:15 B3 You Know You Know 5:06 B4 Awakening 3:30 Bass – Rick Laird Drums – Billy Cobham Guitar – John McLaughlin Piano – Jan Hammer Violin – Jerry Goodman

This is the album that made John McLaughlin a semi-household name, a furious, high-energy, yet rigorously conceived meeting of virtuosos that, for all intents and purposes, defined the fusion of jazz and rock a year after Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew* breakthrough. It also inadvertently led to the derogatory connotation of the word fusion, for it paved the way for an army of imitators, many of whose excesses and commercial panderings devalued the entire movement. Though much was made of the influence of jazz-influenced improvisation in the Mahavishnu band, it is the rock element that predominates, stemming directly from the electronic innovations of Jimi Hendrix. The improvisations, particularly McLaughlin's post-Hendrix machine-gun assaults on double-necked electric guitar and Jerry Goodman's flights on electric violin, owe more to the freakouts that had been circulating in progressive rock circles than to jazz, based as they often are on ostinatos on one chord. These still sound genuinely thrilling today on CD, as McLaughlin and Goodman battle Jan Hammer's keyboards, Rick Laird's bass, and especially Billy Cobham's hard-charging drums, whose jazz-trained technique pushed the envelope for all rock drummers. What doesn't date so well are the composed medium- and high-velocity unison passages that are played in such tight lockstep that they can't breathe. There is also time out for quieter, reflective numbers that are drenched in studied spirituality ("A Lotus on Irish Streams") or irony ("You Know You Know"); McLaughlin was to do better in that department with less-driven colleagues elsewhere in his career. Aimed with absolute precision at young rock fans, this record was wildly popular in its day, and it may have been the cause of more blown-out home amplifiers than any other record this side of Deep Purple. ---Richard S. Ginell, AllMusic Review

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