

# Swing Theory

Eat your heart out, Marsalis! The L.A. Phil's got a new musical maestro in Herbie Hancock

| By Sam Wasson | Photography by Mathew Scott |

Jazz giant Herbie Hancock has mated musically with just about everyone—from Miles Davis to Joni Mitchell and Leonard Cohen to Pink. And after more than 50 albums, a dozen Grammys and an Oscar for scoring *'Round Midnight*, his repertoire is still growing. His new CD, *The Imagine Project*, will be followed by a making-of doc, featuring such megastar collaborators as Seal, Chaka Khan and The Chieftains. All of which dovetails with Hancock's new gig as the L.A. Phil's Creative Chair for Jazz. Starting July 7 at the Hollywood Bowl, he'll present a summer's worth of jazz legends, culminating in his 70th birthday concert on Sept. 1. Wait, did someone say 70? Happy birthday, *Rockit* Man.

**ON DISNEY HALL** If it were a piece of music, it would be written by Wayne Shorter. They're both innovative and classy.

**ON HIS NEXT ULTIMATE COLLABORATION** I assume you mean American artists? Well, I haven't done anything with Snoop Dogg yet. You know, he's a family man now. He's funny, and a good actor.

**ON THE SEXIEST FEMALE VOICE** Natalie Cole—that's one I immediately think of. Annie Lennox and Paula

Cole have sexy voices. Christina Aguilera has an incredible, bell-like voice.

**ON MUSIC'S ROLE IN A NEW ERA OF PEACE** There's a path to peace in global collaboration. I wanted *The Imagine Project* to be one stepping-stone on that path: to take the difficult circumstances of today's world, and through music, turn them into medicine. That's what the blues is all about. Gospel too. They grew out of slavery. So did jazz and, actually, rock and roll.

**ON THE NEW KID IN TOWN** I love [Grammy-nominated pianist and composer] Geoff Keezer, just to name one.

**ON SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT** People think Herbie Hancock is a great [stage] name. How could people think I'd make a stage name of Herbert? If I had a son, I wouldn't name him Herbie, that's for sure. When the *Herbie* movies came out, I felt a little bit better about it.

**ON AUTO-TUNE** It's like all of a sudden everyone's discovered Auto-Tune, but it's been around for years. It's becoming a cliché. But if it sounds good and people want to hear it, nothing wrong with that.

**ON THE NEXT BIG THING** Melodyne. It's software that can change tuning. More than that: It can change where a note is placed in time. It's pretty amazing. **A**

