

John Carl (Jon) Hendricks

Singer, lyricist, and drummer, born in 1921 in Newark, OH. Jon Hendricks has been called the "James Joyce of Jive" by Times Magazine and "The Poet Laureate of Jazz" by Jazz critic and historian Leonard Feather. He has distinguished himself as a vocalist capable of turning instrumental choruses into lyrically interesting voices. Before Hendricks reached his teens, his family moved to Toledo, where he began appearing on radio and where he encountered the pianist extraordinaire Art Tatum, who took a keen interest in Hendrick's musical development. A brief encounter with the phenomenal saxophonist Charlie Parker caused Hendricks to pursue music professionally.

He was the key lyricist and principal member of the trio Lambert, Hendricks and Ross formed in 1958. The group remained together for 6 years, during which time the trio toured widely and recorded extensively, featuring a repertory of jazz vocalese. The trio mastered the technique of adding words to Jazz instrumental classics, including those of Basie and Ellington. After that, Hendricks performed with the new group, Jon Hendricks and Company. He moved to London in 1968 and performed in Europe and Africa for five years. He frequently performed on British television and appeared in the British film "Jazz is our religion" and the french film "Hommage a Cole Porter". He then moved to California where he was a jazz critic for the San Francisco Chronicle and taught classes at California State University at Sonoma and the University of California at Berkeley. His 1985 album Vocalese won five Grammy Awards. His television documentary, Somewhere To Lay My Weary Head, received an Emmy, Iris and Peabody Award. His stage work, Evolution of the Blues, ran an unprecedented five years at the Broadway theatre in San Francisco. Count Basie, Dizzy Gillespie, Art Blakey, Buck Clayton, Miles Davis, Thelonious Monk, Wynton Marsalis, and Bobby McFerrin are among those with whom he has worked. As written in the New Grove Dictionary of Jazz, "He is a fine scat singer, and is also adept at imitating instrumental sounds that his improvisations often surpass the solos played by his accompanists."