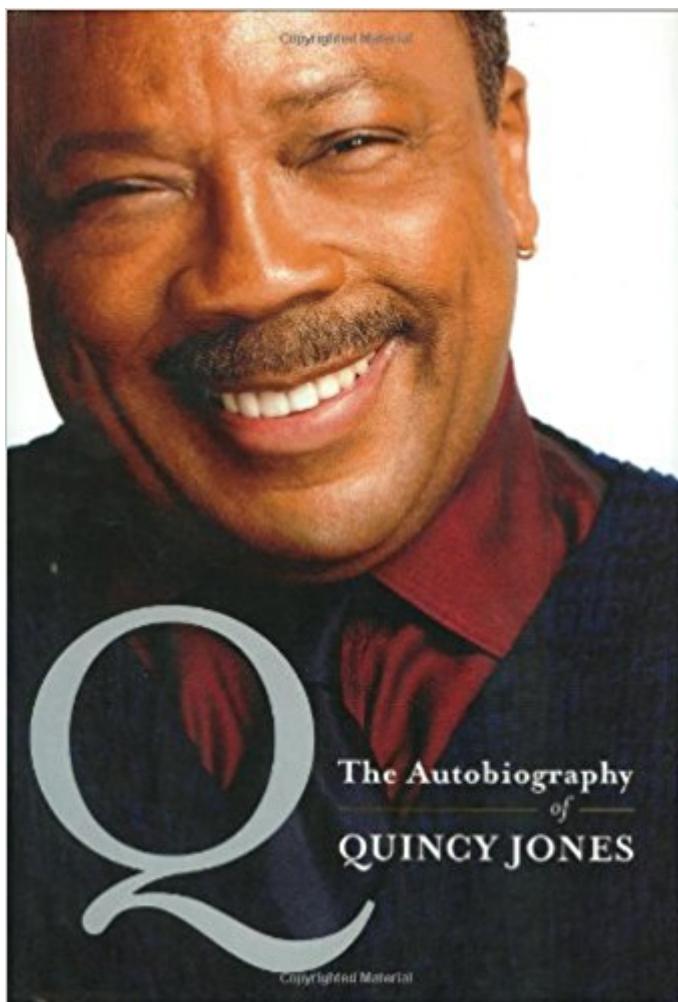


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# Q: The Autobiography Of Quincy Jones



## Synopsis

Musician, composer, producer, arranger, and pioneering entrepreneur Quincy Jones has lived large and worked for five decades alongside the superstars of music and entertainment -- including Frank Sinatra, Michael Jackson, Steven Spielberg, Oprah Winfrey, Ray Charles, Will Smith, and dozens of others. Q is his glittering and moving life story, told with the style, passion, and no-holds-barred honesty that are his trademarks. Quincy Jones grew up poor on the mean streets of Chicago's South Side, brushing against the law and feeling the pain of his mother's descent into madness. But when his father moved the family west to Seattle, he took up the trumpet and was literally saved by music. A prodigy, he played backup for Billie Holiday and toured the world with the Lionel Hampton Band before leaving his teens. Soon, though, he found his true calling, inaugurating a career whose highlights have included arranging albums for Frank Sinatra, Ray Charles, Dinah Washington, Sarah Vaughan, and Count Basie; composing the scores of such films as *The Pawnbroker*, *In Cold Blood*, *In the Heat of the Night*, and *The Color Purple*, and the theme songs for the television shows *Ironside*, *Sanford and Son*, and *The Cosby Show*; producing the bestselling album of all time, Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, and the bestselling single "We Are the World"; and producing and arranging his own highly praised albums, including the Grammy Award-winning *Back on the Block*, a striking blend of jazz, African, urban, gospel, and hip-hop. His musical achievements, in a career that spans every style of American popular music, have yielded an incredible seventy-seven Grammy nominations, and are matched by his record as a pioneering music executive, film and television producer, tireless social activist, and business entrepreneur -- one of the most successful black business figures in America. This string of unbroken triumphs in the entertainment industry has been shadowed by a turbulent personal life, a story he shares with eloquence and candor. Q is an impressive self-portrait by one of the master makers of American culture, a complex, many-faceted man with far more than his share of talents and an unparalleled vision, as well as some entirely human flaws. It also features vivid testimony from key witnesses to his journey -- family, friends, and musical and business associates. His life encompasses an astonishing cast of show business giants, and provides the raw material for one of the great African American success stories of this century.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

He reached an apogee of fame in the mid-1980s as the producer-arranger of Michael Jackson's blockbuster album *Thriller* and the charity single "We Are the World," but Quincy Jones has been a force in American music since he was a teenager. He swung hard enough to play with beboppers like Dizzy Gillespie; he studied composition with the legendary Nadia Boulanger; he scored dozens of films and TV shows; he arranged and/or produced albums for everyone from Frank Sinatra to Leslie Gore, and rappers like Melle Mel don't disdain the old man either. Looking back at age 68 in a good-natured autobiography supplemented with brief chapters by such friends as Ray Charles and ex-wife Peggy Lipton, Jones asserts, "I've been driven all my life by a spirit of adventure and a criminal level of optimism." Given his beginnings, growing up poor in Chicago and Seattle with a mentally ill mother lurking in the background, that's quite an achievement. Jones never stood still long enough to let sorrow catch him, and though his treatment of his personal life is standard Hollywood glib ("Though Nastassja [Kinski]'s and my relationship as a couple was not destined to last, she is a great friend"), his prose catches fire when it touches on music: Dinah Washington "could take the melody in her hand, hold it like an egg, crack it open, fry it, let it sizzle, reconstruct it, put the egg back in the box and back in the refrigerator, and you would've still understood every single syllable." His furious energy may have been fueled by personal demons, but his joyous sweep through a half century of American pop convinces you that Jones was right to keep moving: "Nothing is ever wrong if it's going someplace," he asserts. "Music is about ever-changing." --Wendy Smith

With some chapters written by Jones, and others by his family and friends (Ray Charles and Peggy

Lipton, to name a few), this (auto)biography full of behind-the-scenes anecdotes has an improvisational feel that suits its subject: a jazz musician and superstar composer. Jones came from a hardscrabble background split between Seattle and Chicago when he was still a boy, his schizophrenic mother was placed in a mental hospital for a time, and he was raised by his father and a stepmother. Jones discovered his talent for music early on, and hit the road with Lionel Hampton's jazz band when he was still a teenager. Hampton is just one of the musical greats who makes an appearance Frank Sinatra, Dinah Washington and Ray Charles are others. Jones scored his greatest musical successes during the 1970s and '80s (during which years he composed film scores and Michael Jackson's albums), but the strength of the book comes early on, when he describes the joy of his discovery of music, his early friendship with Charles and his struggles and joys as a jazz trumpeter on the road. "When I played music, my nightmares ended. My family problems disappeared." But to Jones's credit, he doesn't hold back his narrative when those problems caught up with him in the 1980s and he suffered a mental breakdown. With the help of his friends, Jones has composed a life story that gives much more than the typical celebrity memoir. (Oct.)Forecast: This title will appeal to many, including fans buying the CD boxed set, *Q: The Music of Quincy Jones*.Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

I very much enjoyed this book, especially the first half and within the first half, most especially his childhood -- which certainly had its challenges. The situation with his mother broke my heart, but he and his brother left alone broke my heart even more. Not that there is any self-pity in this book. Not a bit. He had it rough, that's for sure. But it was cool how magical music was for him from the start. The way things went for him beginning at such a young age -- his career surely was ordained!! loved hearing about all the cool guys in NY, especially Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Clark Terry and so on. Also the scoop on what it was like touring the U.S. and Europe. Quincy really goes into detail about band life, which was fantastic. The second half of the book was more like a resume to me and less personal. I wanted the personal because I can find all the resume stuff -- accomplishments, recording/producing/arranging for this celebrity and that movie, etc. -- online. I wanted to know more of what he was going through, how he felt. Maybe he was just working so much, there really wasn't time to absorb and reflect. He was a workaholic. Maybe he couldn't express what he was going through because he was buried in non-stop activity. There is a brief narrative re: a nervous breakdown after taking Halcion for a year. The drug didn't allow him to dream. He doesn't detail what the nervous breakdown entailed other than lack of wellbeing, lifelessness type of thing. I bet he hallucinated, because when a drug prevents you from dreaming in your sleep, it will insist on it when

you are awake. I'm totally conjecturing here, but I wouldn't be surprised. I didn't sleep for about a year and I sure hallucinated. What a drag. Anyway, I'm glad he recovered. I loved the way every other chapter was written by a friend or family member giving their take on his situation at various times in his life. That was really interesting. Unfortunately, I have to give the publisher a big one-star for their formatting. Don't they have anyone checking the Kindle version? There were no paragraph indents in the entire book, which made it annoying and difficult to get through.

I bought two. One for me and one as a gift for a friend of mine who is life long friends with Quincy. We both absolutely love it. I would stay in my car when I got to destinations just to keep listening. He's got a great voice along with great stories... This is a must hear for any musician!

The autobiography of Quincy Jones is like one of his arrangements: masterful, engaging on several levels, and state-of the-art. Jones' life story seems MADE for a highly dramatic, award-winning t.v. or big screen movie -- and I dearly hope it'll be made into one. Musician. Producer. Businessman. Composer. Arranger. Determination and incredible talent skyrocketing him over big obstacles. It's fitting that Jones' biggest passion is music because this outstanding autobiography truly SINGS. From the first pages, you're thrust into the drama -- and challenge -- of Jones' life. Born into a poor family, throughout most of his life (well into his adult years) Jones struggled with how to cope-with and at times how to distance himself from a mother who suffered from severe mental illness. Music became his savior and Jones embraced it like the stable motherly love which he sought and he lacked as a child. He embraced Mother Music, letting its beauty embrace, comfort and sustain him. There are several things that sets this book apart from other show biz bios and makes it such sheer JOY for readers of ALL ages (old fogies like me who grew up with his music as well as young folks interested in music, interested in biographies or interested in show business and the arts in general): 1. PANORAMIC STYLE. There is so much in it that we can only list a little here, such as the poignant vignette of a young, arts-smitten Jones, just discovering his musical "chops" and bonding with a blind teenage musician named Ray Charles who basically mentored and inspired him; his later associations with greats such as Sammy Davis Jr, Ella Fitzgerald, Frank Sinatra, Michael Jackson and many many more. Jackson, he writes, "wanted to be the best of everything" so he "went to the top model in each (show biz) category to create an act and a persona that would be unequalled." But "somehow later on the line between the reality and the fantasy got blurred." In the end, Jones writes, Jackson became "a total sponge, a chameleon." Jackson practiced hours and hours to perfect every single move, gesture and facial expression. I am haunted by Jones' portrait of

Sinatra. For all the tough-guy accounts elsewhere, Sinatra comes across as a noble and principled human being -- cooking Jones breakfast when he learned that Jones stayed up all night working; insisting that African-American musicians for his Vegas concert be allowed to play and get good rooms at a casino and telling his security to do significant bodily harm to any racists who harassed them, even the slightest bit.2)SECOND VOICES. Not all chapters are written by Jones. He also let others write their accounts about parts of his life, and not all of this material is complimentary. This adds a documentary feel and a sense of balance that most show business autobiographies lack.3)USEFUL OBSERVATIONS. In his chapter on Michael Jackson's rise to the top of the music heap he notes that writes that he learned that "Nobody stays at the top. Nobody." Success, he writes, is "about preparation, then finding the right opportunity" -- and that he learned that "being chronically underestimated can be a gift." Jone's autobiography takes you through the 20th century's top musical and show business eras, and gifts you an incredible cast of famous well-etched cameos. The depth, ease, and detail of this panoramic journey is paralleled only by his private trek -- from poverty to aspiration to success, all amid personal family tragedies. In the end, we see a man (and artist) who constantly survived and triumphed due to his humanity -- and his unceasing personal growth.

Of course I knew of Quincy Jones before I bought the book, but I guess if I am honest I did not really know why and would have struggled to name anything other than his work with Michael Jackson. Once you get into the book you realise just how much of an influence he has had on Music production over the last three generations, spanning from big band through to film scores and of course music of many genres. I found the book fascinating and inspiring, but it also confirmed that even such public figures are human and do not get everything right. Jones admits himself that he was not as present as he should have been for his children and as a result they have struggled with their own demons, it is unusual to find someone so successful who does not have a mega-ego. I recommend this without hesitation, find out more about how he has and still is influencing almost everything we hear on TV and radio.

Had trouble finding this book locally. So afraid he would die before I could get it. But he keeps popping up on tv, looking like he's 50. I'm shooting for death at 120, and it looks like Quincy is, too. Just started reading it, and as a big jazz fan, I can only read when I have lots of time, 'cause I know I won't be able to put it down. Also appreciate the lists of musicians, records, and awards.

Great information on a legend

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