

R.I.P. Quincy Jones



Music giant Quincy Jones died November 3rd at age 91 after battling pancreatic cancer. Jones' career spanned seven decades, starting in the 1950s' as a jazz arranger. He began recording solo albums in 1955 after touring Europe with multiple jazz orchestras and almost starving with his own band, The Jones Boys. By the late '50s, Jones had met Frank Sinatra, and six years later he started arranging and conducting the bands on his albums. The '60s also gave Jones the opportunity to produce hit pop records for singer Lesley Gore. He started scoring for films and wrote soundtracks for *The Pawnbroker*, *In the Heat of the Night*, *In Cold Blood*, *The Italian Job*, and the 1975 cult classic *The Wiz*, where he met Michael Jackson. There were many other films he created music for and he famously produced *The Color Purple* in the '80s after discovering Oprah Winfrey. Television was another arena that benefitted from his music. Jones wrote the theme song for *Sanford and Son* and composed for the *Roots* miniseries and *The*

Bill Cosby Show. No other African-American had the job of musical director and conductor of The Academy Awards before Jones. Mercury Records made him the first Black music executive when he was hired as the musical director of the company's New York division.

The American public always connects him to his production work on Michael Jackson's most important solo albums, *Off The Wall*, *Thriller*, and *Bad*. *Thriller* has gone down in history as the best-selling album of all time. The '80s was the era when he released his album, *The Dude*, that had appearances from his goddaughter singer Patti Austin and James Ingram. It was Jones who brought together the biggest names in pop music for the "We Are The World" recording session to raise money for the Ethiopian famine in 1985. His trailblazing ways touched the world of hip-hop when he released his *Back on the Block* album in 1989, which had appearances from rappers Ice-T and Big Daddy Kane. Thirteen-year-old R&B singer Tevin Campbell got his big break singing the Jones' "Tomorrow (A Better You, Better Me)" on the album. Quincy Jones' reach expanded into television production in the '90s when he produced *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, which was Will Smith's first acting job, and *In the House*, which starred LL Cool J. He also produced *The Jenny Jones Show* and the comedy show *Mad TV*. In 1993, Jones co-founded *Vibe* magazine with David Salzman. In his seven-decade career, his reach was felt in multiple genres of music and media. He even appeared as himself in several television shows. He was just as committed to his humanitarianism by lending his support to the NAACP, GLAAD, AmfAR, Peace Games, and Maybach Foundation. His We Are The Future project launched in 2004 to help poor children survive and pursue their dreams. Jones' accomplishments are too many to list because his contributions to pop music and culture are unlike any other artist before and after him. He opened up his life to the public by publishing his autobiography in 2001, *The Complete Quincy Jones* in 2008, and the 2018 documentary, *Quincy*. In 2022, he published a book of life

advice, *12 Notes: On Life and Creativity*.