

# Media Questions Of The Week

Why was the Quincy Jones tribute at the Oscars relegated to Queen Latifah singing “Ease on Down the Road” by Charlie Smalls from *The Wiz* from the soundtrack that Jones produced?

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## Throwback: Michael Jackson & Diana Ross-Ease On Down The Road



[youtube id="3S6nThvnAiM"] Diana Ross and Michael Jackson recorded “Ease On Down The Road” for the 1978 Motown-produced film adaptation of *The Wiz*. Charlie Smalls wrote all of the music for the 1975 Broadway production of *The Wiz* which originally debuted at The Majestic Theater in Maryland. Smalls’ music was used for the film version of *The Wiz* — except for a few songs written by Luther Vandross, Quincy Jones, Anthony Jackson and Ashford and Simpson. The Diana Ross and Michael Jackson recording was Jackson’s first time collaborating with Quincy Jones and it was also his first of two Grammy nominations with Ross. The studio disco group Consumer Rapport first recorded “Ease On Down The Road” in 1975 and made it a number one dance hit. Ross and Jackson’s version also charted, the movie was nominated for four Academy Awards and Smalls won a Tony Award for the Best Score. Despite those achievements, the film failed at the box office and was harshly criticized with most praise going to Jackson’s performance and the set design. *The Wiz*’s failures

lead to Hollywood's refusal to finance Black musicals for a long time until Spike Lee emerged years later with *School Daze*. *The Wiz* still managed to have a pulse that lived among its fans and it also became important because it is Michael Jackson's only film role. In 2015, NBC remade *The Wiz* with Queen Latifah, Shanice Williams, Common, David Alan Grier and Mary J. Blige as *The Wiz Live!*