



Smithsonian  
*National Museum of American History*  
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Funding for the Smithsonian Jazz Oral History Program NEA Jazz Master interview was provided by the National Endowment for the Arts.

**QUINCY JONES**  
**NEA Jazz Master (2008)**

**Interviewee:** Quincy Jones (March 14, 1933)  
**Interviewer:** David Baker with recording interviewer Ken Kimery  
**Date:** September 7, 2008  
**Repository:** Archives Center, National Museum of American History  
**Description:** Transcript, 44 pp.

**Kimery:** Give me . . .

**Baker:** Just the name and the date, right?

**Kimery:** Your name, the date . . .

**Jones:** That means we got to hang out more. We haven't seen each other for two years. We've got to catch up. You're looking good though, man.

**Baker:** I feel good.

**Jones:** You're taking care of yourself.

**Baker:** Trying. A lot of . . .

**Kimery:** Okay David.

**Baker:** My name is David Baker. The date is September 7th, 2008. I'm going to be doing the interview – oral history project – with my very dear friend Quincy Jones.

{ doorbell rings with a food delivery and the need for payment; this segment is omitted from the transcription }

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



Smithsonian  
*National Museum of American History*  
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Q, one of the things I'd like to talk with is what you were talking about when you were eleven years old, in your book, the autobiography – talking about you knew immediately, that evening, when you sat at that piano, that this was where you belonged, your place to be in life. It made me start thinking about something that you exemplify probably more than any other person that I've known in history, and that is the power of music. I think about your humanitarian activities, the things you do at the Olympics, and wonder how any one man can bring together as many egos as *We Are the World* and have everybody smiling and happy and contributing toward a single goal. I talked to a lot of people about you, because I care so much. I don't know anybody who's able to blend as many egos together, because it looks like all of these things that happened across your life, you've always been able to have conciliation, people coming together and acting like they really are human beings, when they don't do that under any other circumstances.

**Jones:** When it doesn't come naturally.

**Baker:** I just wonder, to what do you attribute, other than maybe your own life, to the fact that you're able to move so easily with people who are 180 degrees apart?

**Jones:** I think, number one, it probably comes from getting out there in the jungle real early, in terms of life. Another one that might be a little off the wall, is I never knew what the word "mother" meant. So I had to deal with life in a different way, because it's our planet, I think, where the daughter is identified by the father's approach towards her, and the mother towards the son. Not having experienced that, I think that came into play too. What it made – I made a pact with myself very early in life. If I don't have a mother, I don't need one. So I made music my mother, once I found out that's what it is, because it's – the incident you mention before about eleven – that's the personification of an eleven-year-old with the drunken dreams of being a gangster, coming from the Chicago ghetto and my father working as a carpenter with the biggest gangs in the world, the Jones boys in Chicago, working through the northwest, through the sober reality of finding that piano, which was like a divinity call, and knowing that music was my real calling, instead of being a gangster. Because Chicago was the training ground for the biggest gangsters in our nation. It was an astounding reality. The question you asked me, I think the answer is love. I think that's why I don't like to work with people that I don't really feel, or we don't – the magic is not there. Because if there's love there, whether it's Ray Charles or Frank Sinatra or Michael Jackson, whoever it is, whatever you're working with, you have to love enough to be introspective, to find out what they're made out of as a musician, as a creator, what their ranges are about, what their capabilities are. Really know, and dig in.

I remember for *Thriller*, I went to Seth Riggs, who Michael was being coached by. He said, "I need a fourth on top and a fourth on bottom, because he's always been singing high." We couldn't have made that album if we hadn't gone through that process. But that comes from love enough to thoroughly examine every detail of what's going to

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



happen, because you have to know when you have to push push push push push, and you have to know when it's time to chill. You have to know when you tell an artist the stature of Ray Charles, Billy Eckstine, or Sinatra, to jump without a net, you better know what you're talking about, because those guys take no prisoners. They're rough, [?]. All of them, Frank and Ray, we came up since we were 14 and 16 together. Frank, you better real quick to figure it out, that you suggest it to him privately and not tell him in public, because that's the way it works.

I know I'm talking a lot.

**Baker:** No, no, please.

**Jones:** I'm 75. That's what comes with the number.

I remember a specific event. We're both beboppers, so you know how that works. I had just been through two months of re-orchestrating all Nelson Riddle's arrangements and Gordon Jenkins and all these things for [Count] Basie's band. We didn't have any strings. So I had to – we had to do bucket mutes with the harmonies and have a single unison line with four flutes on top to assimilate the sound of strings. All these things. *My Kind of Town* and all that stuff – and *Fly Me to the Moon*. Frank was the first one. I had worked with Peggy Lee and Eckstine and all these people. Everybody was writing down a show chart: 14 songs plus false bows and two encores usually was the format. With Peggy at Basin Street East or whatever, that was it. But they kept writing it out. Every time they'd make a change, they'd write a new list. That was boring for everybody: the secretaries, us. Frank comes in – I said, why didn't anybody else think of that – with 3 x 5 cards with each song on each card. I said, that's what it's about. Then you just shuffle this one up here, put that down there, so you can make – it sounds silly, but it makes a lot – after a while they get tired of rewriting the list, and they compromise. With Frank, we didn't compromise.

We'd rehearse, and I wrote – or orchestrated – re-orchestrated *My Kind of Town* to leave no prisoners. That had to close. Nothing could follow it. So we get in the rehearsal, and Frank put that first and put *Fly Me to the Moon* at the end. I knew that wouldn't work. So I just let it go down, because they're just cards. We got to the dressing room. I was right next door. I heard him warming up. He said, “Amanda won't you walk with me. Amanda won't you . . .” When he is in that mode, he's getting ready to kill on the stage, because with the Rat Pack, they don't do that. They drink until 5:30 at the steam room, and they're wasted by the time they hit the stand. I'm trying to say, what do you guys do to Frank? He's a different man. He's here 45 minutes early warming up.

Anyway, I went next door, and I said, “Francis, I think – I'm sure that this will work better like this: *Fly Me to the Moon* at the top and close with *My Kind of Town*.” He said,

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



“Cool. Cool, Q.” That was it. *Sinatra at the Sands*, that’s the way it goes down. Not one word. He said, yeah, let’s go. It was just the two of us.

A short way of saying that long answer is, it’s about loving enough to care and deal with the details of the humanity and the creator.

**Baker:** It’s something – I’ve thought a lot about this – is that I’ve known you for a long time, even before the aneurysms. I don’t think I’ve ever seen you down. I know you talked about having gone through a time that you couldn’t dream. I didn’t see you across that time. I always felt, and still feel, that you’re indestructible. Part of it is, I think, love, caring about other human beings. That is in evidence on almost everything you do.

**Jones:** With you too, my brother. You’re a love brother too, man. So you don’t fool me. I knew you’re a professor and everything, but you’re a love man too. That’s why I love you.

**Baker:** Let me ask you something. These are life lessons when you’re talking about that. I’d really like to know, are there some other life lessons, particularly specific kinds of things? You talked once about Count Basie telling you, wait a minute. This guy carried you when you weren’t drawing all those people. Are there other life lessons . . . ?

**Jones:** Give him half of his money back. I was in Connecticut. I’ll never forget that. He’s got a great memory.

**Baker:** No, you’ve got the memory, because you put a book together. Are there other life lessons that are that profound?

**Jones:** So many it’s unbelievable. I have been losing weight and all kinds of things lately, just because – I am lucky now – I’m fortunate that I knew [Carl XVI] Gustaf, the king of Sweden, now. I knew him way back then when we were partying with his sisters – way back in Sweden. Two of my kids have Swedish. I got a Polar Prize and all this. I feel like France and Sweden are part of my home, and the people do too. I don’t know what happened, but it’s – a skoal brother, I guess.

**Baker:** Okay, I’ll buy that.

**Jones:** I’m sorry.

**Baker:** That was good.

**Jones:** That’s the best I can come up with this morning. So Gustaf and Silvia [Queen of Sweden] presented the Polar award. It’s for a classical musician and a jazz one. It’s like a

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



musical Nobel Prize. He got me – Allen Counter from Harvard. You know Allen, don't you?

**Baker:** Sure.

**Jones:** He's a great man. He got – Allen got to them, who's their representative, and got me in at a time when I needed it. 14 Nobel doctors come to the Karelinska [Institutet] every year, and I meet them for six days. It's the greatest thing that ever happened to me. That's God. From urology to – everything, every category. They're the top guys in the world. I've never learned so much in my life. I won't get into all the details, like kiwi is the royalty of the fruit, kale is the royalty of vegetables. Because they made it real clear. We are self-contained emotion machines. Boy, I heard that description. I'd never thought about that before. There's no programming into us. That brain controls the whole – if your brain and your heart is okay, they can fix all the rest. I've got titanium knees now. Are you kidding? Brain operations, four screws, and polyester strings from pulling the rotator cup off. Anyway, that's another story.

Lessons: all the things – I'm so happy with my kids, every day. They make me the happiest people in the world. The bottom line is – they said that your mind is so powerful, that if you think dark thoughts and you're mean-spirited, you're going to get ill or die. To live a happy, healthy life, you love, laugh, live, and give. If you came to my home or stayed with me four days, Tomas Olsson, the head of the hospital – I had all of the doctors I've had in my life there. Twelve doctors. The brain operations, the knee guys, the dentist, everybody. It was one of the nicest – I don't know why I did that, but it was one of the nicest nights I ever had in my life, because they remember all the babies, the knees, the head, everything. They did it all, for the – what do you call this? Appendectomy. I feel like a robot sometimes.

There are things because of that that made me think a little bit about the reality of life, because they say, if I do what they say, I can be here until 110. I'm on the board – the guys at MIT too. Marvin Minsky and his wife Gloria, [Raymond] Kurzweil, and [Nicholas] Negroponte. Between the two of those – and Keith Black – and the guys are top doctors in the East. Ben Carson. All these guys. You couldn't be any more blessed than that, to know what's going on about the color-coded genomic breakthrough at Cal Tech. They're breaking down the proteins and genes now. Nanotechnology, which is going into carbon and hydrogen atoms from silicon to microchips. That's the longest trip you've ever seen. Minsky, I hang out with all over the world. He's the co-founder of artificial intelligence. He is no joke. I guess especially orchestrators and arrangers and musicians, we think the same, and that's why there's an affinity, because you're dealing with details and emotion, because music is the only thing in the planet that affects the left and right brain simultaneously, emotion and intellect. All the time it engages both. That's powerful stuff. That's why it hits. I saw those people last night at that show. I couldn't believe it. At one point everybody was separated maybe about 20 feet from the stage with

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



Paul. He was singing – never heard him better in my life. I’ve known him 45 years. Tom and Jerry. Paul Simon. He’s so good. He says, “Guys. You’re just kids. You guys will do anything you want. Come on up here.” Those people ran up there like 15-year-olds. I’ve never seen anything like it in my life. They’re in their 50s and 60s. They ran, stormed the front of the stage, swinging and popping and clapping and shaking booties. I couldn’t believe it. 60-year-olds killing it. I never seen a young audience act that wild.

**Baker:** Of course, again, I see you create that kind of situation wherever you go.

I’m going to ask you again about your memory, because I went through the book – your autobiography again, and we’ve talked so many times, and I’m astounded at how much clarity there is. So it must be passion, love, and all of these other things that stimulate it. Because I see you talk about a thing that happens on a specific day at a specific time, and you’re able to label that. I just wonder, is that something – for instance, I watched you do something like this, like memory, when you came in and I asked you about something – we were getting to do a bit of your music – and I asked you, what tempo should it be? You put your hand to your ear, and you said, “Quarter-note equals” – whatever it was, and I turned on the metronome, and it was that on the thing, and I just wonder, because that’s memory too. All of this is a part of I think what makes it work. Obviously the fact that you could take a piece that you’re going to do with Frank Sinatra, pull together all the extraneous experiences, and turn that into something where you’re going to be judged at the highest level, because Sinatra is Sinatra . . .

**Jones:** I hear it. Right. *This is Ray*. Ray Charles. They’re all – that’s the experience of having that blessing of having the – the last two years I’ve had several people come to me and explain to me, “You don’t get it. You have had almost a singular experience of working almost with everybody in America in the last fifty years.” I’d never thought about it, until – because you just keep on [?]. I’m with Paul Simon, Tony Bennett, Billie Holiday, Louis Armstrong, . . .

**Baker:** Michael Jackson.

**Jones:** . . . Ella, Sarah, Basie, Duke, Michael Jackson, Aretha, 50 Cent, Snoop Dogg. It’s ridiculous. I’m doing they album with Snoop Dogg and Clark Terry. That’s going to be great. They’re going to do mumbles. He’s going to rap bebop to hip-hop. I love that. Tony Bennett and Stevie – he asked me to do an album with him on Marvin Gaye songs – jazz. It’s great. Joe Pesci – one of the greatest jazz singers I ever heard in my life. Trust me. Eight years old. I used to hang out with him and Tommy Mottola and [Robert] DeNiro and him. We were just partying.

**Baker:** The guitarist?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Jones:** Uh-huh. No, no, no. The record guy. He was managing Hall and Oates back then. This was 17, 18 years ago. Just partying. Hanging out and stuff, and dogging it up. Just a few years ago, about two or three years ago, Joe asked me to come – because guys send me their records all the time. The actors, they love to sing. Jeff Bridges. All of them. River Phoenix. All of them, all the time. They want me – they’re into music, and they’re an affinity in them. But Joe said, “Q.” He was there with that little Jersey sound. He was behind the Jersey Boys too. Him and [Jack] Nicholson and all those guys – [John] Travolta. They’re all from Jersey. That’s the real gangsters, like Chicago. He says, “Q, I want you to hear my new album.” I said, “This is my only day off. I’ll listen to one. Okay, Joe?” He’s a beautiful cat. “Okay.” I could not believe what my ears heard. I suspected him to be what the guys were sending me before. Wrong. He’s got pitch like Sassy [Sarah Vaughan]. He’s got concert – because he’s a jazz singer. He’s been singing since he was eight years old. I could not believe it. I’m doing the album with him. I wrote the notes to an album after I heard it. He did it with Joey DeFrancesco, who can play.

**Baker:** The organ player.

**Jones:** Pat Martini [Martino], and the guy with John Clayton – Hamilton.

**Baker:** Hamilton – Jeff.

**Jones:** Killer, killer. Phrasing: Miles Davis phrasing, Lester phrasing. Everything. Pitch, feel, unbelievable. You’ll see. Adjectives don’t cover it.

**Baker:** When you think that you’re really one of a kind – who were the mentors? Who were the people? Because I can’t even find a model for what you do.

**Jones:** It’s a combination of a lot of things, from Basie to Ray Charles to Clark Terry to Nadia Boulanger. They don’t get any better than her.

**Baker:** I was going to ask about that.

**Jones:** Add Stravinsky and Bernstein in there, and Copland and – what is it? – all the guys.

**Baker:** I just wonder, how do you shift gears? Like, for instance, not only do you transcend the time thing, but you deal with all kinds of styles. I’m wondering, who are the mentors? Did you study the scores of somebody like Ellington or somebody such as . . .

**Jones:** Of course. But that was all part of the thing from the very beginning. That’s 13 years old. It was the first time I got in my arm – when I started playing trumpet – first I started drums – percussion and everything – sousaphone, tuba, b-flat baritone, e-flat alto.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



I played french horn and *Silent Night*. I remember that when I was about 13 or 14. And played trombone, because I was no dummy, and I knew in the marching band, the trombone players were up there next to the majorettes.

**Baker:** The drum majorettes.

**Jones:** That's right. The trumpet players were way in the back. So I said, I'll wait a little while now and get back to the trumpet section, but in marching band, I want to be up there with the – we used to beat the jocks. Every night, we'd waste them. They be in there showering and shaving and all that stuff. We gone.

Then finally I got the trumpet. I always felt like it was about 15 years before I hit Hamp's band [Lionel Hampton]. I had to go back. There's a book coming out next month. Oh, my God. It just blew my head off. When you look – I never looked at it. All of this stuff is coming back and my sister-in-law's showing pictures to represent the last 60 years of music. Blew my head off, because I – it was like I didn't know who was there – who did all that.

I think more than – even in addition to all those great mentors, which I cherish, all, everywhere, from Clark – I talk to him all the time – Benny Carter. Give me a break. Put you on his shoulders. Ben Webster told me before we went overseas with the Lionel Hampton: “Youngblood” – that's what all – everybody called you that – “when you go to any country” – we were going to play all Europe and North Africa – “wherever you go in the world, listen to the music that people listen to, the people, real people, eat the food they listen to” [*sic*], “and learn 30 or 40 words in every language.” I think that has a lot to do with it too. That opens your soul like you can't believe. I'm studying – when he said that, I took him seriously. I was 19 years old. I studied Serbo-Croatian, Farsi in Iran, Turkish, Greek, French, Swedish, Russian. Girlfriends help a lot too. And a longhaired dictionary. Get it. Now I'm studying Mandarin, Chinese, writing and speaking: nee-hao [hello].

**Baker:** I remember you bringing us back on when we were in Germany with “Ich begrüße Sie wieder” – I welcome you again. I remember you walking out to the microphone. I went, “What?”

**Jones:** Said what?

**Baker:** You said, “Ich begrüße Sie wieder,” which means – we're coming back after the set – we welcome you again. I'm thinking – I took that – I didn't know that this – I thought this was isolated. Now you're telling me that it is not isolated.

**Jones:** Yeah. [Mein ? schatz]. I don't know. It's like opening up amazing door. You see this light. The hallway's long, because you have only got – armed with 30 or 40 words,

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



and you want to go on more. If you know – I would say – just two nights ago, [?] is meeting all those people all the time. I always say, where are you from? People, sometimes they freak and sometimes they don't, because I really care, because I'm into global gumbo, like nothing, like nobody in the world, and mixtures of things, and traveling all the time. I say, "Where are you from, girl?" She said, "Iran." I said, "I don't believe it. Let me see you do the [beshcom?]." That's a thing they do over there. We were taught with Dizzy, 1956, with the State Department tour. We went over there in Iran. They do like this – bap, bap, bap. The loud sounds like the biggest clap you ever heard in your life. All the women do it. They said, "What do you know about the [beshcom?]" They do it. Everywhere in the world. The carpet store out in Los Angeles, or in a plane, or anywhere. After they finish, I say, ["Hali manu"] – Farsi. They don't know what to say. What it does is it activates a communication, and it opens their soul. It opens mine too. It's astounding. [Jones speaks Chinese: "Nee-hao ?".] It's amazing, and I love it.

**Baker:** You once said on a concert that you couldn't under- – that less than – I forget what the number was. Something like only about 10 or 15 percent of Americans even have a passport.

**Jones:** 11.

**Baker:** 11. I remember you being astounded that other people were not – didn't have this world view.

**Jones:** And only half of them use them. And the 25 percent of Congress and Senate, only half of them use them. So what it has done, David – I'm sorry to interrupt you – it's caused – it's created a kind of an isolationism in this country of not knowing and not caring what's happening anyplace else. I'm just the opposite. I am so nosy. Sometimes I wish I didn't even know or see or care, because it's tedious. I travel like a 12-year-old. It's sick. It really is.

**Baker:** Just coming back from Beijing, too.

**Jones:** Yeah, Beijing and Shanghai. In Los Angeles three days, and here. Get up the next morning to do Maya Angelou at 10 o'clock – 9 o'clock – 7 o'clock – and do the show at 9, and then all the other stuff that's going on. It's astounding.

**Baker:** Let me ask about something that really interests me: Boulanger. I remember that everybody – all the classical composers, from Leonard Bernstein to whomever you want to name. I wonder what kind of things did you do? What do you do . . .

**Jones:** . . . with Nadia?

**Baker:** . . . with Nadia.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Jones:** Some Nadia-isms. We did everything from profound – learning profound things, some that I couldn't even accept in the beginning, because she said, "It's too late for me to treat you like a classical musician, because you've been corrupted by Ray Charles and nightclubs at 13." The classical pianists from England, but she'd slap their hands off the piano, call her housekeeper's kids out, do solfeggio, and blow them away, take them out. But she had a different relationship. She says, "I've had troubles" – I couldn't believe it – "my most interesting times were you and Igor.

**Baker:** Stravinsky.

**Jones:** Yeah. She wrote it in the book. I was with her until she was in her nineties. She's an incredible human being, Romanian and French, and a little Russian, I think, too. She would always book me last at Fountainsbleu in the summer.

**Baker:** So she could spent time with you.

**Jones:** We'd go out to Fountainsbleu in summer. Trente-six rue Ballou all of the rest of the times, at her apartment. That's where I met Stravinsky one day and freaked out.

**Baker:** You called him genius. I remember you said that.

**Jones:** Yeah, and she didn't like that. She said, "That's a stupid word." You know how the French go "phtt, phtt." It's like they're spitting something out. She did that all the time. She was very free. She said, "That's a stupid word, but if you have to use it, it should be used to describe someone who has accomplished the height of their accomplishments using sensation, feeling, believing, attachment, and knowledge." I've never forgot that.

**Baker:** I was very taken with that.

**Jones:** That hits it, doesn't it? That's all inclusive.

**Baker:** That describes you, because that's what . . .

**Jones:** No, but it describes a lot of – it's what we – those elements – I never heard that combination of words. The lady would say things. One took me about ten years to get my arms around. She said, "You only have real freedom when you totally restrict the territory – musical territory." A jazz musician, you don't understand that at first. But she's right, because no matter how free we get, we still have a structure, and you've made decisions. The drummer's going to do this. You know, and it is improvisation, but it is structured, and it's loose structures are there. Everybody just doesn't do what they feel all the time.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Baker:** But you don't seem to get boxed in. Let me ask about your experiences in Hollywood, because even when you came out there, this wasn't a norm. There were some people that delved into it, but I'm trying to think of, like, *The Pawnbroker* and some of the – tell me about what that was. Who were the people? Benny Carter? Who else? Earl Hagen? I don't know.

**Jones:** I wanted to be in film – wanted to write for films since I was 15. I don't know how that happened, because, as I said before, when I've been looking at this book and everything else, and I thought it was 15 years – I started playing trumpet '45, 1946 or something, and it felt like this long time before I was with Hamp. It's just, as a trumpet player and an arranger, I was with Hamp at 19. I never thought about that, because it felt like a longer period of incubation. When you look at the reality of it, it freaked me out. The whole thing was like that. It just always surprises, because you never took the time to look back.

I'm sorry. The original question?

**Baker:** Basically, who were the people who facilitated your getting into writing in Hollywood?

**Jones:** That 15-year wait. I was 15 years old. I used to go play hookey, 13, 14, 15, all that. I used to go see these 11-cent movies down on Second Avenue in Seattle. After a while, I was reading Earl Hagen's underscoring book. It was Earl Hagen there, wasn't it?

**Baker:** Yes.

**Jones:** I started to get indoctrinated about what they were talking about, so I could understand a little bit. After a while, the Twentieth Century Fox movies, I could identify Alfred Newman's influence on it. Alfred Newman was a monster. He ended up being a real close friend until he died, because he was not a snob at all. Then I could hear Victor Young at Paramount. They became like ideologies That was the bar – the standard. That was where the ceiling was. Stanley Wilson over at R.K.O. It was amazing. All of that sounded a bit more familiar. But no brothers' names were on those screens. Long, four-syllable, eastern European names . . .

**Baker:** Tiomkin . . .

**Jones:** . . . who are my friends. Broni[slaw] Kaper. Dimitri Tiomkin. All of that stuff. Miklós Rózsa. A lot of the guys, eventually we became friends. But step by step, it was – I did a movie before that in Sweden. Arne Sucksdorff, who was an Oscar winner, a Swedish guy, like a Disney 15-minute short. He asked me to do *The Boy in a Tree*. I was so happy I couldn't see. Did that. Didn't know what the hell was going on yet. Then time went by, a couple of years. I was working to pay off the debt from the tour. We got

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



stranded in Europe with the band. Sidney Lumet called me. He said – Lena Horne had just played in *For Lena and Lennie*, the album we did on Impulse!. Lena wrote the liner notes for that. Sidney had married Lena's daughter, Gail. He was getting ready to marry her. He called and says, "I couldn't get John Lewis to do this picture, but I want you to come down and take a look." I took a look. I said, "It doesn't need any music." He said, "Oh yes it does. And you're going to do it." I did that, and I thought there'd be some more opportunities after that, and it didn't. I had an agent that was Percy Faith's son, Peter Faith. He was a great person. He says, "I don't want you to take 'B' movies." Because at that time, Jerry Lewis was calling and all these kind of guys. He says, "No, we're going to do . . . ." Jerry was good. But he says, "No, we're going to wait for different stuff." The first one he called me for was *Mirage*. It was Gregory Peck and Walter Matthau. We went to Paramount – I mean to Universal. The producer came out. Holy – he looked at me like he was startled, because he didn't know I was black. Because there weren't that many – nobody – there weren't no black movies. This was 1963 or something. He said, "Just a minute." He went back in the office and said, "He's black" – "He's a negro" – shvartzer, they called it.

**Baker:** Yeah, shvartzer..

**Jones:** It was amazing. That's what [?] said. He was busy. He said, "Let's call" [Henry] "Mancini," because Mancini was like my brother. He said, "Get in the twentieth century. This man just left Nadia Boulanger. He's not going to put guitar behind Gregory Peck." Later on, Gregory was one of my best friends, and my mother and his wife still. He said, "That wouldn't have been a bad idea."

Anyway, that one came. Then, little by little, Cary Grant called to do his last movie and was – do you know he was a great jazz musician? Cary Grant.

**Baker:** Oh really?

**Jones:** Yeah, and Mark Rydell. Mark was in – he was in a soap opera here and Sidney Pollack was like his representative. These guys were back here doing t.v. when I was working at Mercury. They used to follow me around to the Apollo. "Man, what do you want?" He said, "Mark can really sing, and the girls love him." They weren't directors yet. I remember they would follow me up to the Apollo. I said, "Okay, okay, okay. Let me hear him." I heard him, and I recorded Mark on four songs. He wrote a song called *Penny*, and we did some other standards. I still – he still – he was a good looking kid and everything else, and he – they came out. Mark was one of the biggest directors. Sidney Pollack, I did his first movie, which was *Slender Thread* with Sidney Poitier and Anne Bancroft. It just started to – in very cuckoo ways, started to build. Then in the beginning, having done [*The*] *Pawnbroker* and [*In the*] *Heat of the Night* and *In Cold Blood*, you get your label: "Okay. He's a mystery writer." You get a label out there quick. I said, I'm going to change that. I did *Out of Towners*, *Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice*, and – what

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



was the other one? – *Cactus Flower*. Three comedies. Then they started to think, he’s a comedy writer. I did a western. You have to not let them . . .

**Baker:** Put you in a bag.

**Jones:** That’s right. Put you in a bag. It was amazing, because then there were no black movies. *In Cold Blood*, we went through it. Truman Capote: “Richard, I just can’t understand why you’ve got a negro doing the music to a film with no people of coloring in it.”

**Baker:** *In the Heat of the Night* you had the same thing.

**Jones:** That’s faith, because Richard Brooks was tough. He was with Bogart. He was in the Rat Pack. He was saying, “He’s doing the God-damn movie. Forget it.” Afterwards, fortunately, Truman called me up and said, “I’m so sorry.” He was crying at the whole thing. He had no idea, because we got an Academy nomination for that. In Chinese, they’d say [? yi bou yi bou], which means step by step. And the steps are unpredictable. They can’t . . .

**Baker:** You opened a lot of doors. I wondering, because a lot of people didn’t walk through the door, because they got labeled being one thing or another. I think, like Duke a little bit, labels – you don’t get hung up on labels.

**Jones:** I hate it. Duke’s got me a junkie on that. Herbie Hancock’s like that too. We just did a BBC thing. So he says, “I know there’s that little thing.” We used to be the same way. That little thing about – we didn’t like them. “Those cat’s are selling out,” and da-da-da-da-da.” I don’t even want to hear about it, and Herbie either. We’re like – been like brothers, in Chicago since 19 years old. We talk about that all the time. If you can do it, do it. Because all the guys that are talking about, “That’s not jazz. Those guys are selling out.” Get out of her. When we were 13 years old, we were playing schottisches, bar mitzvahs, bat mitzvahs, Sousa, bebop, rhythm-and-blues, strip music. You had to play everything, because we’re playing for the kitty in those days, with Ray Charles. If you didn’t know the songs, *Big Fat Butterfly*, you were in trouble. They didn’t care about bebop.

**Baker:** It’s amazing that Boulanger – I remember – I read in the book that she tagged that “sensation, feeling, belief, attachment, and knowledge” by saying, that works, and it doesn’t label you on any specific thing.

**Jones:** No, and one of my proudest possessions is a picture of – I did my first television production with Duke Ellington, *We Love You Madly*. Because I was upset with the networks for saying we’ll do Rodgers, Richard Rodgers, and so forth, but we won’t – we’re not interested in Duke. I said, oh really? Then I got tenacious. [?], we went out to

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



make it a mission. Because then Duke died, the year after that special. Did you ever see it?

**Baker:** No, I haven't seen it.

**Jones:** It's unbelievable. We had Basie, Billy Eckstine, Sammy Davis, Joe Williams, Roberta Flack, Sarah Vaughan, Aretha Franklin, Peggy Lee, Jimmy Cleveland. It was ridiculous. It's a classic in Europe. Duke gave me a picture afterwards. It says, "Q" – you know how Duke do – he says, "You will be the one to continue to de-categorize American music." It gave me goose bumps, because he felt the same way. I've never forgot it. But I was that way already, because it was like, you don't have to make any research or anything else to do a Michael Jackson. That was always the mindset. Or Leslie Gore. And not only that, but [*The*] *Italian Job*. I just got back from England and got an Ivor Novello last year. When I got the Ivor Novello, what I didn't know – because Michael Caine did that 40 years ago. My son was born in London. Michael told me his birthday, which is Pi in algebra, the first three numbers: 3.14. That's my birthday. My daughter taught me that. My 15-year-old taught me that. She said, "Dad, did you know that Pi is" – the fifteenth letter of the Greek alphabet. I didn't take algebra – "is your birth-?" I asked her her role models. She said Jane Goodall and Albert Einstein. She said it's Einstein's birthday, mine, Prince Albert, Billy Crystal, and Michael Caine.

Michael Caine was born the same year, month, day, and hour. Celestial twin. We've been celebrating like maniacs for 40 years. He taught me Cockney slang and all this stuff. We were recording at Olympic studio in London, 1968, and my son was born. I said, I'm going to write this song just like a Brit. I swear. We went all the way, like British music hall. So I wrote one song. I don't know whether you saw the picture – they tried to do a remake of it – called *Self-Preservation Society*. [Jones sings:] "Get your skates on, mate. Get your skates on, mate. Da-da-da-da-da-da da-da-don. Drop your plates of meat right upon the seat. This is the Self-Preservation Socie[ty]." – guess what? [David] Beckham had me at dinner with him two months ago. Everybody at the soccer stadiums in London sing – the whole audience – 80,000 sing that damn song. He showed me a video of it. I couldn't believe it. All the guys, when I got to the Ivor Novello, they said, aw, man, a brother couldn't write a song like that.

But Michael taught me the essence of Cockney slang and took me to his neighborhood and his slum. He said, "We were" – he's a straight guy. That's like looking at yourself, because we're celestial twins. He is, "Get on." He's got the [?]. He is the funniest guy, loveliest guy you can ever meet in your life. He said, "I was glad when the Pakistanis and the West Indians came over. It took some of the heat off the Cockneys." Cary Grant was a Cockney too. Great guys.

He would teach me the essence of Cockney slang: don't say the rhyming word. That's where it's hip, because it's like bebop, because it's a personal language. Bebop is related

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



to that. Like he'll say, "Watch the boat on the ice cream when he checks out the Bristols on the Richard." You don't have a clue. You know what I mean? "Watch the boat face" – which is a boat race, which is a face – "on the ice cream freezer" – which is geezer, but you don't say that . . .

**Baker:** Oh yeah, but don't say it.

**Jones:** . . . "when he sees the Bristol cities" – we don't have to go into that one . . .

**Baker:** That's bop – that's bebop.

**Jones:** . . . "on the Richard" – which is Richard the Third, which is the bird, the girl. But nobody knows what you're talking about. I had a lot of that in there too. It's so much fun. It's fun. It is. And the whole 80,000 audience is singing that damn song 40 years later. It's kooky. It's passed being pleased. It's insane.

**Baker:** Let me ask you something else about something that's always intrigued me, is your complete interest in the diaspora, too, about African roots . . .

**Jones:** Absolutely.

**Baker:** . . . and it was before *Roots*, because you were talking about this like two years before *Roots* . . .

**Jones:** Yes.

**Baker:** . . . was even conceived.

**Jones:** Because we did . . .

**Baker:** How have you followed through on that? Is that something that's still . . .?

**Jones:** *Roots* happened to coincide with this amazing journey I took through – going – I said, I want to find out what all of the stuff is about. I'm going to take three months and go for it. That was a joke. It took 33 years, because I met Alex five years after I was into it. He was at a party I gave for the jeunes [?], the blacks, with Roscoe Lee Browne and all those people in the house. There's this little guy sitting over there. He said, "My name's Alex Haley. I'm doing" so and so and so. "Really?" I had no idea what his goal was. Then finally when he found out and we met, he said, "We're doing the same thing." So all that experience helped me too. It was just the first episode or so.

Gula Matari's album I did in 1970, which was like a secret note – a message to Mandela, who I've known for 36 years. We just did this concert for his 90th birthday in London,

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



and we had a two-hour meeting the next day. He said, “Mon bra. Ubuntu.” That’s “I’ll signal you.” That’s the fate of South African, which means the collective is always more important than the individual. That’s what’s saved their souls. He said, “You’ll probably never see me in London again. I’m 90. I’m tired – or the United States – because I’m staying home. But I know you’ll come see me.” Because I always go to his house there and have a good time. He said, “Mon bra.” He said, “You know I like my sweet wine.” He’s got his little bottle of sweet wine there. He’s so sweet. His wife, Graça Michel, grandchildren, just incredible. He asked me to go on the Blue Train with him, which had been integrated during Apartheid. He invited myself, Naomi Campbell, Mia Farrow. Because he’s like – he’s the grandpoppy for Naomi. I’m Poppy. She keeps me busy, and I love her to pieces, but she’s high maintenance. I love her. I do. Sixteen years. Like another daughter.

Anyway, we were on this train. The most amazing experience I’ve ever had in my life was with him, to see how he handles these things and how – we were at his inauguration. Maya and I were talking about that. We’re going on Air Force One with everybody: Colin Powell and all – the whole government, the Gores, Hilary [Clinton]. They asked Maya at the end of all the inauguration ceremonies to come up and perform with the South African people. Colin Powell’s with me. He said, “This sounds like home.” I said, “This is where home came from.” The doo-wop and gospel and everything. We had so much fun. The choir sang to Colin and I at the end.

Maya grabbed a 80-year-old Afrikaner afterwards. He had some buttons up here and this hat and this umbrella. He was crying after the ceremony and everything else. And tutu. He said – Maya held him – he says, “I know how you feel, darlin’. I know how you feel.” He said, “But let me tell you how I feel.” He says, “I’ve never been this proud of my country in my life.” It was historical stuff. In a way – a lot of people call me Ghetto Gump, because I happen to just be there, like when bossa nova was starting or this is happening or this is happening. You can’t control that.

I’m coming back here on the 24th. We were talking about this last night. 1969, Frank called me. He said, “They just played our thing on the moon. Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong. They just played *Fly Me to the Moon* on the moon.” I said, “That’s fantastic. Put it back in the shelf.” Last year, they call me and tell me that Leland Givens [*sic*: Leland Melvin], the African-American astronaut, is going to use *Walking in Space* as his wakeup music in space. So we do a broadcast with Tavis Smiley. I said, “I ain’t going up there. I can’t even drive a car. So I’m going to talk to him on the ground, wherever he is.” We talked about it. Da-da-da-da-da-da-da. I’m coming back on the 24th. NASA’s having a celebration with Neil Armstrong, John Glenn – who I run crazy, because I ask him so many questions, because nobody else has seen what he’s seen – Buzz Aldrin, and Leland Givens. I’m going to conduct a symphony orchestra on *Fly Me to the Moon* and all that stuff. It’s insane. But we don’t have anything to do with it. Once you start to understand, just let go and let God, you have to have a good time in life. That’s why . . .

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Baker:** But don't you think that it is very unusual that you'd be at the birth of so many of these things?

**Jones:** Yeah, but what can you do about it? You can't stop it or start it. That's my point.

**Baker:** And you don't want to.

**Jones:** No. So you just learn how to just let it happen and be strong enough, because you know, *The Road Less Traveled* – M. Scott Peck, right? – he says – he starts the book: life is a struggle. As soon as you accept that, it's going to get easier. To learn – Basie said the same thing. He says, “Youngblood, it's about hills and valleys. Anybody can handle the hills.” That's a metaphor for success. The valleys are the ones that will test you as a human being.

**Baker:** Because when I was looking back through and seeing, like two years before *Roots* came along, you were already talking about this, and how many of these other things? Like for instance, *Soul Bossa Nova*. Who in the hell else is going to put two piccolos over the top of a band? Or the thing you said that happened quite by accident, of a flute player coming in . . .

**Jones:** Jerome.

**Baker:** . . . on the top of that sound.

**Jones:** Yeah, Jerome Richardson.

**Baker:** I can't believe those things are purely accidental. I know it comes out in your life that way, but when you see them happening in this kind of repetitiveness, either – you've been touched.

**Jones:** It is, and that's the thing you have to accept. It is, and you say, it's not an accident, and that you just have to be open enough to receive the thing. It's a mindset. The Nobel guys talk about the mechanism of the brain. I've had this sucker worked over. They probably took some of the cobwebs out where they went in there two times.

**Baker:** And both of those were low-percentages for recovery.

**Jones:** But it's astounding. The last trip over there was last – this – what was this? – yeah, this year. I asked Tomas. He was at my house last – two weeks ago – just in passing, because we got another one there, [Anders Drucklin?], to work with us. Rwanda, we've almost adopted. He's going to be on our Millennium Promise board to work with us. He said he just found – along with the insecticide in the bed nets that they've been

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



using all the time – he found a miracle plant in China called a.c.t., which he guarantees we can eliminate malaria in five years. Now that’s big stuff, and if we do it in Rwanda, you can do it anywhere in the world. Because this guy – the Nobel guys don’t play. So he is volunteer. We talked four hours. Tomas was there too. We also discuss – I said – because an organization – I know this sounds off the path – called EAT we had almost 30 years ago, which was Electronics, Artistic, and Technology, before there was Silicon Valley or computers. The guys used to cross-pollinate each other’s ideas. Silly stuff, like rubber suits you could get for a girl that would make her sensual and excited. I said, “Yeah, but the big problem is getting her in the bathtub. If she’s coming over with lipstick on and makeup, you’re going to tell her, ‘Get in the tub with a rubber suit’? Get out of here.” So you’ve got the techno guys talking to musicians, and they’re talking about something musical. It’s the craziest party. Paul Beaver. Craziest guys I ever met in my life. Alan Kay included, who invented the Mac I and Mac II, overlapping windows, icons, everything. He was telling me about the internet. I said, “You’ve been smoking too much Kool-Aid or something. What are you talking about, computer?” Binary numbers were in Egypt in 3500 B.C. The permutation of two numbers. That’s the secret to i.t., is the binary numbers and digital information. Here we are, 3500 years later, and you’re seeing all this stuff happening around all these maniacs, and they’re around maniacs too. It’s astounding.

**Baker:** You opened that door. Let me ask you something, because we talked – this must have been 10, 15 years ago, when I thought I was going to move to L.A. I had talked to J. J. [Johnson] and thought I was going to move. It turned I didn’t.

**Jones:** I remember that.

**Baker:** But you were describing to me, at that time, Fairlight and all these things which were so advantageous, and I always thought, what a marvelous balance, that you write in pencil, and you don’t set up your own – what do you call it? – the copy – Finale, that you exist on both these levels. How do you do that? For instance, the things that – Stevie Wonder and these people, they’re doing things that you had envisioned, but when they get around to the creative process, you go to the piano, and you write.

**Jones:** Yeah. That’s the basic thing they’ve been doing for 400 years, right? But to think what Herbie’s doing – Herbie was a big influence there too, because Herbie graduated with an electronic engineer degree.

**Baker:** Yeah, over at Grinnell.

**Jones:** Sherman Fairchild lived next door to me. “I didn’t know who the hell he was.” Sherman said, “Man, you know who that . . .” – because these raggedy girls would come to my house. “No. It’s not me. That’s the guys next door.” No-no-no-no-no-no. Fat

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



girls. I said, “No.” Herbie had a Fairchild [Fairlight]. There’s a thing on the internet. Me and Herbie messed with the Fairchild way back then. Herbie was on it.

**Baker:** I remember you talking about it, and I was thinking, what the hell is this? Because when I thought – when you were saying – then I found out it cost more than my house, I decided, well, I’ll talk to you about it some other time.

**Jones:** And now, everybody’s got these machines working for them, the Pro Tools, all of it. I’ve got all the stuff at the house. But I still – we are slaves to just writing it down in the score. I can’t help it.

**Baker:** I still enjoy so much just seeing your handwriting and the fact that then you tell them, “make it a little syrupy here,” make it this . . .

**Jones:** Put a little more garlic here. Some grease with the bass.

**Baker:** Let me ask then about again, because you were out there when Monk [Montgomery] began playing the Fender bass for the first time. That opened up another whole avenue, James Jamison and all those people. Can you tell us anything about what was going at the beginning of this?

**Jones:** Yes. What happened was, in 1999, on one of the covers of *USA Today* – you can check it out – I picked it up one day, and there was a painting of a lady, Steve Case, Bill Gates, and myself. I said, what the hell is that? I’d done an interview, but I didn’t know what it was for, with *USA Today*. It was about what single piece of technology affected your genre the heaviest. I automatically said the Fender bass . . .

**Baker:** Amen. I saw it.

**Jones:** . . . the electric Fender bass, because we got that bass – Leo Fender brought it to Monk just before we went to Europe in 1953. Nobody knew who the hell it was. It’s louder. Monk started playing it. We got criticized in Paris by all the critics.

**Baker:** Hugues too.

**Jones:** [?], [Charles] Delaunay, and Hugues [Panassié] too. They said, “What is that?” We did – the first thing made with Fender bass was *Work of Art* with Art Farmer.

**Baker:** I’ve got it.

**Jones:** There’s rock-and-roll my booty. But I felt inside that this is going to alter music drastically, because without a Fender bass there’d be no rock-and-roll . . .

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Baker:** No rhythm-and-blues.

**Jones:** . . . no Motown, no rhythm-and-blues. That Fender bass did it, because the electric guitar, which Paul Allen has in EMP [Experience Music Project], his big museum in Seattle that [Frank] Gehry did, the evolution of the guitar, which started in 1939 with all those guys – the guy with . . .

**Baker:** Smith.

**Jones:** [Jimmie] Lunceford and Charlie Christian and all that stuff. Some guy that . . . Anyway, when those two babies met . . .

**Baker:** Floyd Smith. That's who you were trying to remember.

**Jones:** Yes, yes. Thank you. It's great to know – to have a professor as your brother. No, I love it. He's got all that stuff in the windows there. You go around the room and it's the whole evolution of electric guitar waiting for some love. He's waiting for his partner. His partner was the electric Fender bass. That didn't happen until 1953. '39 to '53. When they met, it was love at first sight. They just shacked up. They didn't even get married.

**Baker:** I remember listening to the recording with Monk on it, because people were saying, that's not really a bass. All of a sudden, then everybody starts jumping on the bandwagon, James Jamison and all those people.

**Jones:** That's right.

**Baker:** I was going to ask: with Hamp – because you were a visionary with this already, but I guess it was – what was happening with Hampton . . .

**Jones:** Ghetto Gump.

**Baker:** If you say so – with Hampton made this so necessary, because with Fox Walker and Sonny Johnson – I had been told that a lot of this was because they had to have something that could match the volume.

**Jones:** That's right. And that's what happened, is it enabled the electric rhythm section – I mean, it became an electric rhythm section with the Fender bass, not the guitar, because it had no part – it had no allies. When that came, you say, yeah, I've been waiting for you, brother. We're going to show them who's boss now. Even Miles [Davis] in *Bitches Brew*, they had to play different. They had to play like a rhythm section.

**Baker:** 1969.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Jones:** The rhythm section was electric then, and it was the boss. So it changed the way Miles played. You had to play different.

**Baker:** And everybody else.

**Jones:** Everybody. You had to, because you couldn't really go toe-to-toe with it, because it was too strong, the electric guitar and electric bass. So it's very interesting how this stuff happens. We've always been allies, silent allies or not, whatever you want to call it, with technology. We've ridden each other. We – there were about 12 of us out there that were guinea pigs for the whole evolution of the synthesizer. The first one the public ever heard was on *Ironside*.

**Baker:** Oh really?

**Jones:** Absolutely. Before Walter Carlos or anybody – Wendy Carlos. You know about that, don't you?

**Baker:** Yes.

**Jones:** Okay. Before *Switched on Bach*. We were two years before that. '64 we did – Basie was up there as my gambling coach with Sinatra. I lost so much money, I had to go down and do a pilot. They said you either do this doctor thing or *Ironside*. I said, I'll take *Ironside*. That was the first synthesizer the public ever heard. [Jones sings a line sliding up and down in pitch.] Tarantino used it in *Kill Bill*, too. That's the first one.

**Baker:** That's what I was saying again though. When I went back and started preparing to do this, I look and almost every place your footprint or fingerprint was there, like with that. Tell me a little bit about the Schillinger House and Berklee, when you were over there with Herb Pomeroy and those guys.

**Jones:** And Charlie Mariano.

**Baker:** Was everybody moving toward this?

**Jones:** Charlie Mariano. I didn't know what they were talking about at first, but later on, everybody from [Nicholas] Slonimsky – [John] Coltrane used to carry that book around, thesaurus, the scales. In fact *Giant Steps* was based on that twelve-tone harmonization up front. Coltrane always had that book. Between Schillinger and Slonimsky were mathematicians – Russian musicians that proved that the two – only two absolutes are music and mathematics. I never wanted to hear that, because it sounded mechanical, but it's true. Now Mike Milken comes in my life, who's probably the greatest mathematical brain on the planet. He's been in my life almost 30 years now. He comes to the house, and we play around. He teaches me Sudoku just two years ago. I'm a junkie. All of the

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



doctors there – the Nobel doctors – they say, use it or lose it. When they examined me, they did ultrasound with the heart. On a screen, it looked like Iraq. I said, “Oh my God. Looks like there’s a plutonium mine there.” They said, “No, it’s okay.” Because you can’t change how your heart and your brain looks. They say, “Okay, now we check the brain for atrophy,” and they put like a wire do-rag on my head for 20 minutes. I said, “Oh God. What’s this going to look like?” I just sat there and just rested for 20 minutes, then took it off. They were trying to find where the atrophy is. They said that you have to exercise it, use it or lose it. “And a 22-year-old brain.” I said, “Thank you, God.” They said, “We can fix everything else.” Like they put titanium knees in there. It’s unbelievable what they can do. Four titanium screws here, six polyester strings. I put my rotator cuff, pulled it off. I was on a promotional tour and was up in Vegas. I fell on my rug – slipped on my rug – sober. I heard a pop. I didn’t know what it was. I was in Texas and L.A. and Atlanta, and then I went to – I was getting ready to get to the Kennedy Center Honors. The night before I had to conduct Ray Charles’s symphony orchestra in D.C. It was hurting like crazy. Afterwards I went back. The doctor said, “I can’t help you. You tore it off your arm.” The rotator cuff. I didn’t know what a rotator cuff was. I thought it was a shirt, some new brand that Puffy had out. Rotator cuffs. He says – another one says, “I know what to do.” I got a video of that operation, arthroscopic. If I had seen that, I wouldn’t have went in there. It looked like a little iron shark running around in the thing, and all these instruments. They don’t even go in. There’s just one little thing. You know what arthroscopic is. They said, “You’ll never get motion in this arm again.”

**Baker:** So much for that.

**Jones:** It’s unbelievable.

**Baker:** Let me ask you this: who pulled your coat to this level of preventive – you told me once before that when you went in to get checked out, you went in with the supposition that you had leprosy, you had AIDS . . .

**Jones:** That’s right. Malaria . . .

**Baker:** So that any news you got . . .

**Jones:** . . . smallpox.

**Baker:** But isn’t this unusual – I can’t think of anybody else who is at that degree of specificity in terms of preventive.

**Jones:** No, that’s just some ghetto stuff, so when I come back, I feel real good, because I don’t have any of it. Syphilis, everything. The cats went, “You are fine. Your blood pressure’s 128 over 68. Da-da-da. Your psa is 3.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Baker:** No wonder you be smiling all the time.

**Jones:** I'm grateful to God that I'm okay. So they tell you your psa's 14, you've got a problem. The doctor's say if you use boiled tomatoes, broccoli, and green tea, you never have to worry about prostate cancer.

**Baker:** I'm doing all of that.

**Jones:** Hello.

**Baker:** Let me ask you something about . . .

**Jones:** No fruit juices.

**Baker:** Huh?

**Jones:** No fruit juices.

**Baker:** Really? Not even cranberry?

**Jones:** No, no. It mainlines it straight to your liver if you do the fruit.

**Baker:** Okay.

**Jones:** The juice mainlines it. It goes too fast.

**Baker:** You just took care of my cranberry juice.

**Jones:** But see, the thing is, it's mechanics. That's the soul and the science. Every time there's some emotion lotion, which guides the science, there's some brain strain that's backing up – the emotion's backed up with the science. That's whether you're a piano player or a surgeon – neurosurgeon – or whatever it is. You need the training and the scientific background to reinforce what emotions are leading you. But most things are like that. I don't care if it's an accountant or a business – Wharton Business School – or whatever. It's the same thing. Milkens and Perlmans and all these guys come out of Wharton. They're trained for that. Harvard has a specialty. Indiana State – Indiana U., Berklee. It's like an element in the universe that's necessary, the balance. Discipline is made to serve your life. Prolong gratification. Don't have gratification first and pain later. Get the pain out of the way so you can enjoy your gratification.

**Baker:** You were one of the people who long before, when they first started having these conferences and things in the jazz area – Ken, you don't know this – Quincy, Cannonball

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



[Adderley] and I forget who else came out to the University of Illinois – and this was a long time before they started talking about matching up major figures with college bands. Quincy was the conductor of my band, and the soloist was Cannonball. Do you remember this?

**Jones:** Absolutely. You know who else was there that day? Seawind. Jerry Hey.

**Baker:** That's right. Jerry Hey.

**Jones:** Jerry Hey and all those guys. We worked together. Jerry – the piano player, Williams – Larry Williams was there on [?] Montreux.

**Baker:** Larry. All of them I.U. people.

**Jones:** I expected to see some Hawaiians, because Cannonball talked with the Seawind from Hawaii. I think just the drummer and the singer were Hawaiian.

**Baker:** Yeah, and the rest of them were from I.U.

**Jones:** Indiana. Jerry Hey has worked with me for 35 years. He's one of the best musicians in the world.

**Baker:** I see his copying – I mean, I see his hand on things you have him do, where you – like the thing with – what is it? – Al Jarreau? What is that wonderful piece? I can't remember what it was, but . . .

**Jones:** Is it – it's not *If I Ever Lose this Heaven*? That's Al Jarreau's first record.

**Baker:** Was it?

**Jones:** Yeah. He just sang percussion on there. I didn't know he was a singer. It's like Harvey Mason. Harvey Mason was percussion on all "The Cosby Show." I didn't know Harvey was a drummer then. I didn't find out until two years later he was a drummer. He was on percussion.

**Baker:** It seems again, being at the beginning of something again – and I refuse to believe that these things are just strictly by accident. I think they might be fate kind of things – but it was six or seven years before anybody tried that again.

**Jones:** How about Marvin Hamlisch? My daughter goes in the P.C.S. in New York. A 15-year-old dude's graduating. He plays this stuff. I said, "Ping." I never saw – heard it again. A year later, my dentist calls me and says – I was the vice president of Mercury then, and they had told me, "You're a budget buster, because you record Lena [Horne],

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



Dinah Washington, and Sarah Vaughan,” da-da-da. Julius Watkins with French horns for *My Lady with Soul*. About 1100 copies. They said, “You’re a budget buster. Everybody’s doing Roger Miller, the Four Seasons, and Frankie Vallee. Make some hits.” I said, “It ain’t no big deal.” Cocky. I found Leslie Gore. And guess who this kid I saw? My dentist calls me and says, “I’ve got a kid here that has a song for Leslie Gore, Marvin Hamlisch.”

**Baker:** Are you serious?

**Jones:** Marvin Hamlisch wrote *Sunshine, Lollipops, and Rainbows*.

**Baker:** Aw, c’mon.

**Jones:** That’s his first song. It was a hit. Two minutes and eleven seconds with Leslie Gore. We put it in the album. It didn’t work until they did a picture with a ski movie, and it went almost to number one. We had 18 hits with Leslie. Leslie was almost like the first girl in rock-and-roll, before the Beatles. It’s ridiculous. It’s always to be – I like to do dangerous stuff. “Okay, we’re going to try to go . . .” – Leslie was huge. Still is. Can sing her booty off. She just sang the – we did a thing down here she sang on. She’s 65 or something. Tore it up, singing jazz, everything. I found her at 16. Her father owned Peter Pan, the bathing suit company. Life is a trip.

**Baker:** You broke another barrier . . .

**Jones:** You know her brother won two Oscars?

**Baker:** Oh no.

**Jones:** He wrote *Fame*, the score and the song. Her brother, Michael Gore.

**Baker:** How did you move so smoothly from there into the executive side of it, like being the first black for a major recording company?

**Jones:** Accident, accident. I was – number one . . .

**Baker:** But you tell me all this stuff is an accident.

**Jones:** . . . I owed so much money when I came back, because when I had that band over there, I was 26. I had 33 people, dogs, Charlie Parker’s ex-wife, Charlie Parker’s son Baird, Phil Woods, dogs, grandmothers, everything. I – they told us when the show closed, you’ll get – on a Thursday – you’re guaranteed transportation to Saturday. I said, “I ain’t thinking about it. We’ve got a gig at the Olympic Theatre Saturday night.” Now that’s really logical, right? And one in Sweden. So I stayed over there with 33 people for two gigs and gambling on a French tour. Just before I got back from Sweden – what’s his

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



name? – Jacques Demy was doing a picture. He just – one of his first movies, and Anouk Amiéé’s first movie. He said, “I’d like you to come to Nantes.” All my people in Paris come on the train to Nantes – that’s on the east coast – the west coast – “and I’ve got a picture here that I would like you to do.” I’d always – I was eager to do that movie. He showed me Anouk. She’s 19 years old, good, fine as she wanted to be. We’re still friends. They had done a song in the movie. I hadn’t had no film experience. I didn’t know that that was wrong. He wrote a lyric, and that woman was just mouthing the lyrics. There’s no melody. I didn’t know that’s not what you do. I said, “Yeah, I’ll do it.” I get back on the train, and I find out the guy that’s going to book us, a young guy, as gone to 16 cities, took the advance, and disappeared. This was on a Tuesday, I think. You talk about trouble. Ping-a-ding. Mind your mind. No agent, no manager, nothing, and all these people, looking you in the eye. Clark Terry just left Duke Ellington. Quentin Jackson just left Duke Ellington. Phil Woods.

Okay. What’s he going to do? Ten months. We worked with Nat Cole. We went to Yugoslavia. Couldn’t get the money out. We left Spain. I put them on a slow train to Yugoslavia. Andy Williams was on “The Tonight Show.” Nobody knew who he was then. He’d left – followed Eydie Gormé and Steve Lawrence on “The Tonight Show.” Andy always wanted to work with me. I said, “Andy, if you want to work with me now, this is the time to do it, and bring some money, because we’re in trouble.” So he brought \$15,000 over. I took the plane to Paris. I had all my people on the train – slow train to Yugoslavia – and Billy Byers. We went to Paris and knocked that sucker out in two days and got to Yugoslavia about the same time as the band. Got in there. Did 13 gigs there. Had – I’ve got about \$60- or \$70,000. Couldn’t get it out. Tito. It was Communist. So I said, now what do you do now? You’ve got this money you can’t use anyplace else. I’m not going to stay there and spend it. I played with some – it was so rough then, we were on the band bus. We had a wooden bridge across a canyon that went down – I don’t know – two centuries. I said, “No.” Nobody in there said, we’re going to walk on that and wait for the bus. It was crazy.

So I finally figured out, with no sleep, if I started booking jobs in Germany, if I got them, I could recoup that money and – Joaquim Berendt and all those people in Cologne, WDR, and all that stuff – piece by piece, until we got it up to about \$60- or \$70,000, and it worked.

**Baker:** How are they going to get home? They believed in you.

**Jones:** I hocked my life. I sold my publishing company. I had to buy it back for ten times the price I got. It was ridiculous. That’s how I became vice president. I didn’t have a choice.

**Baker:** Because it just seems so logical. All of this – looks like everything was on a collision course.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Jones:** The closest I've ever been to suicide, in Turku, Finland, and I realized then that suicide is – you just want to get a little rest. Because, can you imagine? Okay. It's Julius Watkins, Benny Bailey, Phil Woods, in Germany, at the [?] Club. "Q. C. I need some marks." Bang. Da-da-da. I write it down on some pieces of paper, a napkin or something. "Phil Woods." Dot-dot-dot-dot.

**Baker:** Les Spann.

**Jones:** Les Spann. All of them. Jerome, Benny Bailey. "Q. C." I said, "No." "I want a raise." I said, "Benny, I can't afford it. I'll give you a couple more solos." It was ridiculous. So by the time – then I'd get to Spain after five countries, and I'd have change this from marks, francs – French, Belgium francs – to kroner and Swedish, and sit down, no accountant, nothing – that's not my thing – and sit there and figure out how to put all that into something on the stand, which is dollars, and transfer it to pesos.

Phil's written a book about all this. Phil's a great writer. See, I was doing this stuff, but Phil was telling me what was happening with them. He wrote everything that was happening on the other side. Now I can't wait to read it. I saw three pages of it. I couldn't believe it. Because my kids were there, my ex-wife at the time. I didn't know what was going on, because all I could think about was, how do we survive? It was survival for ten months. In Turku, Finland, I say, I can't take any more, because I've got – performing every night, writing arrangements, trying to work gigs, and talking about paying off. It was ridiculous. You had to be 26 to do that. In Turku I said I can't – I didn't want to live any more. That didn't last long. That's why I'd recommend, anybody who's contemplating suicide, do something you can change your mind on. Shotguns and jumping off roofs don't work. Take some pills, and they can pump your stomach or something.

**Baker:** Or try holding your breath.

**Jones:** That's right. And that'll put you in the alpha state, that holding your breath. Your doctors say you have to think about stopping your heart, and it puts you in the alpha state. In between my operations they told me that. Oh, my life is a trip.

**Baker:** Let me ask a question that's been on my mind for a long time. First of all, I see the innovative things you've done, like with scoring. For instance, it never occurred to me, three horns instead of four, like in much of the things that you score you use three French horns instead of four French horns, and then I found out that the sound is so much more controlled with three horns . . .

**Jones:** And a tuba.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Baker:** . . . and a tuba. So I want to ask you about one other thing. Have you written much absolute music, which is, just, say, for an orchestra, with no – a classical orchestra – with no – that it didn't accompany a movie, or it didn't go with a t.v. show or anything?

**Jones:** Have I?

**Baker:** Yes.

**Jones:** No, but I want to.

**Baker:** Because that's one thing I've been really looking forward to.

**Jones:** I want to badly. I have to find the time to do it. I was asked to do three or four things. Simon Rattle wanted me to do a tour with him. Now that cat is one of the greatest conductors. I said, "You've got to be kidding. You don't even use a score." He's one of the best conductors I ever saw in my life.

**Baker:** Who's this?

**Jones:** Simon Rattle and the Berlin Philharmonic. He calls me all the time. "I'm want you to do a tour. I'm want you to do a tour," 25 dates or something. I said, "No, I've got to get ready for that." Placido Domingo has called me about an opera. I said, "You don't knock that out in a week. That's two years."

**Baker:** Or more.

**Jones:** The Baltimore Symphony to do a piece with Savion Glover and the orchestra, which sounds great. I want to do a street opera, all of that stuff. But I've got to find time to get to it.

**Baker:** You've got a lot of years.

**Jones:** I'm booked until May now: nine movies, three albums, and then this other stuff. But it's great to have something to wake up to every day, because you can sleep when you're gone, dead.

**Baker:** Yeah, you've got plenty of time.

**Jones:** I'm never going to retire. Forget that.

**Baker:** Because I went looking, just trying to find some orchestra pieces that were pure orchestra pieces.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Jones:** You're right. That's what I pray – I have an affirmation I say every day: I know and I am, because God is guiding me. God is guiding me with a divine will to help me build a strong character, stronger and stronger character, that I can love, that I can respect, that I can believe in, that I can live with. It will always be there for my children, their family, my friends, their family, and all of the things that I believe in, and to serve my music, like God wants me to. I say that every day.

**Baker:** Maybe that's the reason why all of these disparate elements are so successful. But they're not just successful. They're things that change the aesthetic. They transform the aesthetic in a way that you couldn't plan. I don't think a person could plan . . .

**Jones:** Uh-uh, no . . .

**Baker:** . . . to do that, because – it's too bad that you don't have a copyright on all of the shit you have invented, because you'd be a trillionaire.

**Jones:** We've got Oprah and Will Smith. Will Smith's the biggest thing in Hollywood history. It's unbelievable. Hancock [*sic*: Smith ?] is at \$300-million.

**Baker:** Really?

**Jones:** Yes. The biggest star in Hollywood.

**Baker:** I remember when you had him on that show, the first year you got those guys.

**Jones:** That's what started it. That's what started it. Oprah with *The Color Purple*. It's amazing. But – I don't know. You just think – it's an amazing journey. Then when these guys told me I could get a few more years, that got me in trouble. I said, I can really kick it now. I said, I thought I'd be about 80 or 90. By 110 I can get some more in of everything – some food, some ladies, some music, some grandchildren.

**Baker:** Can we break long enough to go to the bathroom?

[recording interrupted; it resumes in mid-sentence]

**Jones:** . . . and I'm trying to get the liner notes straight. So we go back, and I look at the personnel on it. I think Max Roach and Paul Chambers, Cannonball, and on piano I see John Williams. Wait a minute. Aw, it couldn't be. It was. Star Wars Johnny Williams on piano, playing bebop. Look at the credits inside. I'm serious. Look at the credits inside. I couldn't believe it. I didn't believe it when I first saw it. Then I found a picture. There's John, with hair, in 1955 . . .

**Baker:** That is so out.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Jones:** . . . playing with Max Roach. Unbelievable.

**Baker:** You know Cannon graduated from Florida State when he was at 17 years old.

**Jones:** What's that great teacher's name?

**Baker:** The guy that has the band.

**Jones:** A classic teacher down there. He used to talk about him all the time.

**Baker:** Me too.

**Jones:** Music teacher.

**Baker:** He's legendary. All of a sudden I can't think.

**Kimery:** [inaudible]

**Jones:** Who?

**Kimery:** [inaudible]

**Jones:** Oh yes, please. This is important.

**Baker:** I was going to ask about some of the other people who followed your model, or some of them were almost contemporaneous with you, like Gigi Gryce and other people, who were making people aware of the fact that they needed to own their own materials and this kind of thing.

**Jones:** Billy Taylor did that to me.

**Baker:** Oh really?

**Jones:** Oh yeah. Singularly Billy Taylor. There's nobody else to talk about. Gigi was aware of it too, but it was Billy Taylor that really laid it on me, I think in 1954. Early. That's why I had Horace's – I had five of Horace's tunes. I had Benny Golson. I did *Whisper Not, Along Came Betty*, all that stuff. I had [*The*] *Preacher, Room 608, Creepin'*. I did about five of Horace's big ones. I gave them all back to him.

**Baker:** That's so beautiful.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Jones:** Every one. I had to pay \$300,000 to get them back on “Sanford and Son,” but I got it. \$300,000. Marty Bandier. I said, “Great. We don’t have to talk to each other.” But I gave them all back. I gave Marvin Hamlisch his too, because it’s a legacy. I understand that. I said, “No, I understand.” It’s 40 years or something that Horace – I gave them all back. Because we learned early, if you don’t have ownership – that’s what I learned the hard way – if you don’t have ownership – I was forced to get into the business, because I didn’t understand it at first or didn’t care, but I had the greatest gurus in the world: Irving Green and Steve Ross – you could not – and Mike Milken – you can’t find anybody better on the planet. Milken’s behind Oracle, behind Steve Wynn, behind Ted Turner, behind Time-Warner, and everything, all over the world. He is one of the greatest minds – Wharton – genius. If you – if I – I’ll do it afterwards, because it’s too much time on the microphone, but when he came out of incarceration, whatever you want to call it – he’s a great man, one of the greatest men I’ve ever met – we – all of his community service stuff, I used to go be there to just support him. We were at a Spanish school one day. He had seven kids get up with calculators, and seven that he had groomed. Before they could get it in the calculator, he showed them how to multiply – just one series. That’s like the fives, 35 – 25 35 45 55 65, right. They couldn’t even program into the computer, these kids, they had the answer, because he does it so simple. 45 times 45 multiplication, we know the missionary position where we’re doing that, right? Mike, what he does is put 45 45 with the “x” next to it. He takes the top right-hand figure and makes it one higher. He makes a 5 out of it. So you just go vertically, and you say 5 times 5, 25 and 4 times 5 is 20. That’s the answer. That’s the way he thinks. The same with 55. You say 5 times 5, 25, is 30. Dang. Then somebody else is taking 10 times the time. So these kids couldn’t even get them in the calculators. All kinds of things. I’ll show you a trick afterwards that will blow your head off. I hated math, with a passion. My daughter’s trigonometry and calculus, geometry, everything. But this one.

**Baker:** Let me ask you something else, because another area that people don’t talk about, where you were taking chances before anybody else was doing that – I’m thinking now of Patti Bown. I’m thinking of Melba.

**Jones:** The women.

**Baker:** I’m thinking that you were using women in high-profile positions ten years before it became fashionable to do so.

**Jones:** I never even thought twice about it. Can she play? That’s all I care. Can she play? Clara Bryant I met when I was 12 years old. She was with Sweethearts of Rhythm. You know Clara? Trumpet player. 12 years old. Please. Can she play? That’s all. Whatever it is. I don’t care.

**Baker:** It opened the door for Diva and so many of these other things. When I talk to Ellen Seeling and those people, they tell me, the first time they saw it was when they saw

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



the Quincy Jones band and they saw Melba writing – what is it? *Reverie*. That she had done the arrangement on.

**Jones:** Yeah. That's by Debussy, right?

**Baker:** And Patti's tunes.

**Jones:** That's right.

**Baker:** And all of a sudden they said, look, we don't have to have an all-girl band unless we want to. We can play in any band.

**Jones:** Oh please.

**Baker:** Unfortunately that has not be replicated by other bands.

**Jones:** I know. Patti Bown, we were trying to get when she was 12 years old. She lived right across from the Washington Social Club, and her mother and father didn't want her to talk to me, because she was playing with symphonies when – she was a genius. We wanted to play in nightclubs. They didn't want us to corrupt her. Patti always wanted to do it, but she had a nervous breakdown. They gave her electric shock treatments and took her perfect pitch away and everything. Patti – we lost her. We lost Jimmy Cleveland. We lost Gil . . .

**Baker:** Jimmy died?

**Jones:** Jimmy's gone. I went through the whole thing. Janet Thurlow is one of the oldest friends I have. She was one of the ones responsible for me being in Hamp's band, his wife. We were roommates, way – God – before electricity. Janet's from Seattle. Jimmy Cleveland. Floyd Standifer's gone. Charlie Taylor's gone. Amputated leg, gone. It's just terrifying. Billy Johnson. All the cats I started with. In two years I lost 139 friends. Ingrid Bergman. Antonioni. It just doesn't stop. Luther. Billy Preston. It's unbelievable. Max Roach. It's just . . .

**Baker:** A lot of people, particularly . . .

**Jones:** . . . Bernie Mac. Isaac Hayes.

**Baker:** Oh yeah. Then you lose Isaac Hayes same day about . . .

**Jones:** Barry White and Isaac are gone. We're redoing *A Secret Garden* now. Barry White's still on it, but they're doing it with Usher, John Mayer, and Kevin Campbell. The

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



hip-hoppers are doing a tribute to me. They're doing my tunes. It's been interesting. [?]'s doing *Ironsides*.

**Baker:** That's real wild.

**Jones:** It's exciting.

**Baker:** I sent a bassoonist out to – named David – that guy who played double bassoon and baritone – he went out there at the same time Jerry Hey did. You guys put him in *Ironsides*. He was in the orchestra as soon as he got out there almost, which was really nice.

I just wonder, again, what kinds of things have got to happen for people to be like you or a cat who's ten years older than us, [James] Moody . . .

**Jones:** Can I give you a suggestion?

**Baker:** . . . or Hank Jones?

**Jones:** Can I give you a suggestion?

**Baker:** Sure.

**Jones:** I'm going to say something now that is now what you expect. I came out first with Hilary [Clinton], right? And what happened? She made an incredible speech at the convention. So you know I'm with Obama. We're not going to worry about that. We haven't met yet. I may have met. It started at my house with Oprah, him, and Michelle, the whole thing, a year and a half ago, and I told him then that you could wait four years, because I'm going to be with Hilary and Bill. I've been living with them. They're like my family, the millenium, 150 Americans, the migration, everything. They're like family. Hilary stays at my house. I love Obama. I really do. I'm very impressed with him and so forth. We're going to try to get a meeting in with all of this madness, because the days are limited. We've got, what? – I don't know – 55 days left or something, right? The meeting will happen. We just sent him a record with John Legend tomorrow, *A Better You, Better Me*, which we did before. John Legend did it. I did an announcement. "I'm with Obama. Let's Barack the house," or whatever.

The first thing that I want to say – and I feel this from the bottom of my soul. I've been talking about it everywhere I go in the world – we are the – I have been – I will guarantee you I have out-traveled anybody on this planet. I don't care who it is. Condoleezza. I don't care who it is. We wear them out. If you see that calendar, you would die. I don't care who it is. We've been around – totally around the world. In two years we've been around the world three times, everywhere. Ankor Wat, Cambodia, China, Latin

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



American, Abu Dhabi, everywhere, Russia, you name it, Brazil, Kigali, everywhere on the planet, Cairo, Kuwait, Qatar, everywhere. Everywhere you go, David, you can't tell what city you're in – what country you're in. It's the same damn music, Montpellier, Tunis, in Monte Carlo, in Cairo, in Rio, in Beijing, in Moscow, everywhere, Brazil, Bahia, Johannesburg. It's the same music. It's American hip-hop or this, whatever it is, the same music. All of them got their cell phone out. All the girls, the skinny ones and the fat ones, got them low-hanging hip-huggers on and the flip-flops and their Adidas on. Everywhere in the world, with music I'm not crazy about. Pop-pop-pop-pop. God-damn techno and shit. We were just – Olivia Vega in Mont[?]. I can't stand it. I got to get out of here. Can't stand it.

Okay, my point is, it would be like America playing all Moroccan music in two years. It's an astounding phenomenon. Because some of them play the good stuff. I come in, and every time, it's unbelievable what they're playing. I know [?]. They're playing Michael Jackson, the brothers Johnson. All of Michael's stuff. It's just unbelievable. It's 30 years, 25 years later.

So, my point is, the indigenous music has been pushed aside. It's not kabuki and bag pipes and da-da-da-da-da. It's this stuff from here. When I got promoted to commander for the Legion of Honor, from officier, I almost cried, because [Jacqueline?] was there and Chirac, who I know very well, and love him. I used to tell Clinton and Gore, we're the only country in the world that does not have a minister of culture, and everybody in the music is playing our music – in the world is playing our music. My first words, I'm going to propose to him, is, we have to have a secretary of the arts.

**Baker:** I've been thinking – I hear that very much.

**Jones:** I'm serious. I'm serious. I'm too old. But we have to have it, because we've got to penetrate the schools . . .

**Baker:** They laugh at us.

**Jones:** . . . and all of the hip-hop dudes. I'll give you \$5,000 if they could – if they – they don't know who Coltrane, Bird, or Duke is. I can't handle it. Because in 30 years, Duke and Coltrane, Bird, Miles, and everything else will be the equivalent to the three B's, or to Rimsky-Korsakov, Shostakovich, and Stravinsky in Russia, or the three B's. I'm sorry. That's the way it is. I've never seen something influencing – I'm not guessing, because you've got to go to know. I spent a lot of time everywhere in the planet – on the planet. We've got to have it. I think – I asked my right-hand guy, Adam Fell, to – just out of curiosity – how many incidents have occurred like Columbine? Because it's sick. You know, as arrangers, we are pattern-oriented. Ah, that was like that and this and this and this and this. 89 similar occurrences of Columbine. They killed 33 and then took themselves out. We traced all the e-mail. They're speaking hip-hop. “Yo, man,” da-da-

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



Smithsonian  
National Museum of American History  
Kenneth E. Behring Center

da-da-da. Neo-nazis. You can find out from intelligence reports. Neo-nazis speaking hip-hop. It's a contradiction. So what it tells me is it's a country that is trying – is lost, and they don't know what their soul is. They don't know who they are, whether they stand for in the world. A minister of art would get this down – a secretary of the arts would get this down to the school system. I was trying to take to Roger Page years ago. Unless we – we have to do this. It's fallen. The country's soul is not intact. You know what I'm saying, David.

**Baker:** Of course. I know very well.

**Jones:** They don't know who they are. I have a girlfriend in St. Petersburg. She's on solid ground, because they know who they are. China, the same thing. I go to a conservatory. I never heard such – 2,000 musicians – I never heard such musicians in my life, indigenous or Bach's bass quartets. The guys got sweaters around their thing, 19 years old, killin' it, with passion and ability.

Secretary of the arts, secretary of the arts, secretary of the arts.

**Baker:** And we don't even want to . . .

**Jones:** People think it's military. The hell with military.

**Baker:** Amen.

**Jones:** It's the soul. Music's too powerful. I know what it can do.

**Baker:** Like you said at the very beginning. It's transformative.

**Jones:** It is.

**Baker:** I'm looking at . . .

**Jones:** He healing.

**Baker:** They're not even . . .

**Jones:** They don't know.

**Baker:** . . . really spending any money Dana Gioia, and that ain't even being close to being a czar of the arts. I had people coming down from Canada – Ralph Bowen and people like that – to study with me on a Canadian Arts Council grant, because they take care.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Jones:** But like Jim Ferris, his museum. When we [?]. He flew the Ole Miss plane from Jackson to take us, bring over there to see the museum of the blues in Mississippi. It's so important. I have the recording. I had to work my butt off for 33 years to find all of the details of a music that has been deprived – the biggest cultural contribution America will ever give the world, because it came from a lot of inventors. It came from sociology. It came from the slave ships arriving in Virginia with the Protestants who tried to destroy them as human beings, family and culturally. Thank God for the French.

**Baker:** Amen.

**Jones:** When they hit New Orleans, down at Congo Square – you're talking about 1865 and the deepest most profound polyrhythms on the planet, and vocal skills. Don't even – don't mess with South Africa. Don't even go touch it. Colin Powell said to us there, "Sounds like home." No, this is the home of that.

**Baker:** Thank you.

**Jones:** Don't mess with the drums in West Africa.

Then, here come the French and Spanish, and the mulattos, their servants – powdered wigs and the same thing they're wearing – their Napoleon stuff and everything. But the Africans had never seen cornets and clarinets and trombones. That's why – Sidney Bechet and Kid Ory and stuff – they thought they had a little bit of upmanship on the black slaves, so they were a little uppity. In 1904, the Jim Crow, they said, you're all black. So now they sit there with their little powdered wigs on and stuff, across the hall from the Africans and stuff. We better figure this out, brothers, real quick. So Mutt Carey picks up a glass, a toilet plunger, and [Jones imitates an early jazz trumpet sound]. A cat's got a washtub with a broomstick on it and . . .

**Baker:** And a big ol' rope.

**Jones:** . . . an inner tube on it [Jones sings a swishing swing rhythm]. That stuff's never invented before. They took the drums away from them in Virginia in 1692, so all those complicated polyrhythm's disappeared. So they started to do it [Jones slaps a rhythm].

**Baker:** With the body. Hambone.

**Jones:** Whatever. Body percussion. And when they come back after 1865, they couldn't remember all the heavy 12/8 and 6/8 stuff, so we got [Jones sings a shuffle rhythm]. Shit never been done before. They just made up all that stuff. Scott Joplin. You had Debussy, Stravinsky, and those guys copying those guys. Chopin. They don't get it. They don't . . . know. They really don't, and it kills me. This happened so long and it's so rich and deep

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



that it takes over the whole planet and these .... ..... don't know what's going on. It kills me. It kills me.

**Baker:** That's what I – I go through this. At Indiana . . .

**Jones:** It makes me sick.

**Baker:** . . . the one course I will not let them take out is the soul and jazz course, where we have – we come all the way . . .

**Jones:** But you're strong, and you've got the position to. Most of the time they take that away and keep classical music. That's European classical music. Our classical music is jazz . . .

**Baker:** Jazz music.

**Jones:** . . . and blues. Ask the Stones. All the hip-hoppers are coming to me now to talk about, "I want to be a good musician." Before they were saying, "Hip-hop is where it's happening." I know it is, and I love hip-hop. You know I'm the biggest supporter out there. But I said, guess what? I just got back from Brazil. I go to Brazil every year for 54 years. We're doing a film down there next year for the favelas and Katrina. I'm going to take the musicians from blues and jazz, a float for each one. We [?] talk [?]. I've been down there a long time. I go every year. We use the money to help the favelas. I saw them start in 1956 with D[?] at 3,000 kids and no parents. Now it's 600,000. I go every year, because these cats are gangsters, but they're my buddies. Come on now. Get in queue before 4, because we start slingin' dope at 4. You get there, and they play for you, and they're humble and polite. The guys play. The Afro-reggae guys play. Coming out, they're cleaning their AK-47s. The army can't go in there. The helicopters [?]. These cats don't play. They've got in perfect in Bahia, El Salvador, because [Colinius?] Brown's got them and told them, it's drums, not guns. No dope and no violence. Gilberto Gil's the minister of culture. I've known him 45 years. One of the best musicians in the world, singers and guitar players. Unbelievable. What a culture. Have you been to Brazil?

**Baker:** No.

**Jones:** David Baker, however you do it, try to find a way to get down there February 2nd. You have never experienced anything like that in your life, like the carnival. I promise you, you will have goose bumps the time you get off the plane until the time you leave. Total Angolan influence and the merger of the most powerful African culture and lyricism of Portuguese and African, like you'd never heard in your life, and it never stops. It will make beehives grow on your booty. I'm telling you. Nobody – you can't – you won't believe it. I go every year, and I'm blown away after seeing it 54 years. Don't – let's not talk – but they know how to do it all, from cachaza, [?katarenyo] – that's a

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



sugar-cane drink that will sneak up on your butt – and the feijoada and the [?bundal dungas]. The most beautiful [bundal dungas] on the planet, beleza pura. Unbelievable. Because it's the life experience that is unique in the whole planet. We're going to shoot it in 3-D and high def. We're going to do the problems of the favelas and the splendor of the spectacle. It's going to blow your head off. I've all those girls: Luciano – Juliana Paez and [?Annabatiste Barroes]. All of the foxes. The dancers, they're incredible. We got Negro ponte. We're working with him. He's got a \$100 computer for people that don't have telephone lines for PCs. We're doing some great stuff. We've got a water plan with some very strong guys. We've got all the dots connected. It can make a difference.

Last night I was with him until 2 this morning – Luis Moreno, an ex-ambassador of Columbia, one of the most powerful ambassadors in the city. You know why. He's a great guy, a 360 person like you are. He quit that job – he left that job, because they asked him to be president of the Inter-American Development Bank. It's the second to only the World Bank – Wolfenson – I mean Wolfowitz – Wolftrap. He's got 31 countries. After that thing, he wants me to go to 13 of them with him, starting with Haiti. We're going to take Wyclef [Jean] and Petra, start doing some real serious, strategic, realistic moves that you can get your arms around. Wycliffe is passionate about this too. Everybody's passionate about it.

Luis is one of the best guys in the world, but we need the secretary of the arts. Because this stuff is exciting. It's more than I should get involved in, because there's a lot of work. It's a lot of work. I'm telling you. Passion and money is not enough. You've got to know the N.G.O.s. I talk to Bono an hour almost every month. Bono's one guy in the world that understands it. We went to the Vatican in '91 – 1999 – with Jubilee 2000 and Randall Robinson and [?]. We saw the Pope for 25 minutes. I'm talking fast because I want to get it over with. [?] Third World debt relief. 25 minutes. [?]. That's the [?] Vatican. Pope Paul, who is an amazing cat. He's a screenwriter and an actor, you know. Great screenwriter. He had asked me to do an album with him 20 years ago – I felt so bad – doing his poetry and do the thing – I was busy with Michael, and I felt guilty when we went in there. But thank God he didn't speak English, so he didn't hit us. 25 minutes. We read him our mission statement – it was debt relief – and he read his affirmation back. It was a four-pages letter. Bono and I went to [?]. It was a Thursday. Saturday, the *Herald Tribune* said because of that trip – [Bob] Geldorf was there too – we got \$27½-billion dollars – billion dollars – debt relief, for Bolivia, Mozambique, and the Ivory Coast. You've got to try. We have no agenda. It works. In three days. I got a picture of the three of us grinning like [?]s eating sauerkraut. We were so happy. Because *We Are the World* made [\$]63-million. We pitched the government to send [\$]800-million. But that's nothing like this. Bono was shocked too, because the same with Live Aid. We did everything we could, but this thing just ran by that. Bono told me last week that he's going – they're going to do – [Nicholas] Sarkozy's going to do, [BI?] and the president [?] going to give him a billion euro for African farmers.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



Bono is one of the smartest men I ever met in my life. We [are] partners in crime on some things. He's got data. I've got my thing. We're partners with Harvard and Jay Winsten in the medical department. We do a Q prize every year for peace. Next year we're doing the conductor for Venezuela. You know about him? 27 years old.

**Baker:** Oh yes. The guy's got all those kids.

**Jones:** Him and his mentor. He's taking over from Esa-Pekka [Salonen]. You know that?

**Baker:** I heard that orchestra when they did the Bartok concerto for orchestra, before they got into the Latin – it's the most amazing thing I've heard, and it's been perpetuated. The guy who – the older guy . . .

**Jones:** We give them – both of them, as mentor. It's about mentors. The mentor and him. He's 27 years old.

**Baker:** He's dynamic.

**Jones:** A monster. He's taking over the L.A. Philharmonic from Esa-Pekka. You know that?

**Baker:** No.

**Jones:** He is. He's going to be the permanent conductor of the L.A. Philharmonic. It's awesome. We'll give him the Q prize in the next two months.

**Baker:** What he did – because when – I was not in the room when they started, and I said, is that the Chicago? that brass? I walk in, and instead of it being four people at the bass trombone, it was about six or seven of them. And when they got done, then they had a kind of fun time. They were playing – the clavé was going so heavy, you couldn't stop moving. This cat has done this, and it's perpetuating.

**Jones:** The good parts about it, the kids have got cuts – throat's cut and gun wounds and everything. They're ex-street gangsters. That's what they come from. That's what I mean made me cry. It's he's taken 500,000 of these little suckers and turned them around. Got them playing violin and flutes and woodwinds and stuff. Wow.

**Baker:** Contra-bassoons.

**Jones:** Everything. It's unbelievable. I see these faces, knife cuts all over them. Unbelievable.

Anyway, the dots are getting connected.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Baker:** I wonder, what is it going to take to ultimately move the United States to take a lead role in some of this stuff? Because basically, the first thing that gets cut is anything that has to do with the arts.

**Jones:** You know I know that. That's why I'm being a pain in the butt, and I don't care, about secretary of the arts, secretary of the arts, secretary of the arts. We need – what is wrong with us? Why does it take us so long. It's time for us to have a – we have a culture. We don't have to prove that. We have to get in there and act like we own it and stand behind it. It's there. It's going to go without you. It's already gone. It's not like something you have to establish or maybe American music will be influential in the rest of the world. Are you crazy? It's the king of the music in the world.

**Baker:** We know that.

**Jones:** It's insane. It's insane.

**Baker:** How does that ever get to a public? We've got people who are ignorant or people who don't give a damn or people who threaten.

**Jones:** And thinking militarily – what the hell is that? It means nothing. That doesn't have power. That's not God's work.

**Baker:** No. Not by any stretch.

**Jones:** But the music is God's work. You can't see it, smell it, touch it, taste it, but you can feel it.

**Baker:** You called it. The power of music. You've watched it in Venezuela the difference it made with those kids all of a sudden. I don't know if you've ever seen the video. They run it on "60 Minutes" a couple of times.

**Jones:** It's awesome. It's funny, because Naomi Campbell's like my daughter, 16 years. Mandela's her grandpoppy. I'm poppy. She's the sweetest girl in the world, but boy, she can do it. She's always into something. "Poppy" – she's a writer now, one of the editorial staff for *GQ*. "Poppy." "Yes baby?" "Somebody wants to talk to you." It's Hugo Chavez. She's dating his son, right. He says, "You've got to come down." I met Castro at Birdland two weeks after the revolution. Pee Wee Marquette – he's staying at the Theresa – Pee Wee Marquette said, "Hey, you all better not mess with me. Better tip me more, because Castro said when the atomic bomb comes in, they're not going to hit the Theresa Hotel." Castro was a nice guy then.

**Baker:** I remember when you cooked the chicken in the room.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Jones:** I cooked the chicken. Ron Brown was raised at the Theresa.

**Baker:** Oh was he?

**Jones:** Yeah. He was raised. His father was the manager.

**Baker:** I used to stand out in front of that many times listening to Malcolm. I was so glad again, in light of the diaspora, your references to Malcolm X in the book. I found them very touching, very moving.

**Jones:** He was something else. Detroit Red. And his daughter, Atallah Shabazz, is an incredible human being.

**Baker:** I don't know if it's going to take another revolution to get the arts ever being right, because right now people are so proud – certainly Dana [Gioia] is doing a better job than anybody who's been in there. But still, it's not – he doesn't have the resources.

**Jones:** No. It has to be an army. It has to be an army. It has to be. Let's get real. It has to be an army of levels. It's like, when I got to China, I talk to all the Communist leaders – the leaders you cannot believe, cannot pick up the enormous responsibility of them. One billion, three-hundred-million human beings. It's beyond comprehension, beyond. We were in the one meeting, before we saw the BOCOG guys – it was the ruling party – the ruling family, the party, and the government. That's how it works. I can't even begin to think how hard it is to manage that many people and how they do it.

But nobody's in position to throw stones at anybody, and that's not how you solve stuff. Because Russia did it that one way. I was very close to Gorbachev since '87, perestroika and glasnost. I saw him again in London two years ago. They had a thing at Althorp. It was in his honor, by the *Tatler* or whatever, Geordie Greig. I said – it's white ties, and I can't stand white ties. We had dinner the night before. He is a great guy. He's the guy ended a thousand years of Communism. He did. I don't care what anybody says. Russia treats him badly. So does America. He's really not – doesn't have a job. So they're having this thing at Althorp. [?] is dead now. I know him really personally though. He comes at Bono's place. We stay in Dublin with two teddy bears. We sit and talk about the realities of the world. These are human beings doing this stuff. Putin too. It's an attempt to have a Communist hard party line and ravishing capitalism. Ain't going to work.

**Baker:** No. They've already figured it out.

**Jones:** I know what's going on. I know how it works. I really do. In China, there, the guys, or wherever they're hitting it, or Carlos [?] in Mexico. Castro [?] \$87-billion.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Kimery:** David, this is just time-wise . . .

**Jones:** I know I'm rambling.

**Kimery:** No, no, no, no. I don't want you to miss your flight. I know that you have food there too, but if we could ask the one question with . . .

**Jones:** It's his fault. I'm kidding.

**Kimery:** . . . this is [?]. NEA, being a Jazz Master.

**Baker:** Oh, you mean about the value of it.

**Kimery:** Yeah, what's . . . ?

**Baker:** That leads – we've already really been there, but basically, just have you comment on the importance, if you think it is important, of being an NEA master – of what they're trying to do.

**Jones:** I love – listen. I've always loved what that's about, is having that recognition of one of our most powerful cultures on – in the history of the planet – one of them. I know how it's been abused and everything else. Even personally, I know how some quarters have taken the range of my success, and lack of success in some of this – is something that makes me angry sometimes. Herbie and I talk about it. Herbie feels the same way, that people can't be more open minded and not box you in. Because there ain't no box for me. You think I'm proud of – you think I'm ashamed of *Thriller*? You know, not a chance. Not a chance. Because I could do the other thing too. If you can do all of it, you should do it.

**Baker:** Amen.

**Jones:** If you can't do it, shut up.

**Baker:** No boxes.

**Jones:** Don't sit there and tell me about what Stanley Crouch thinks. I don't care. Are you kidding?

**Baker:** I'm hoping that . . .

**Jones:** I love Wynton, but please, don't tell me what to do musically. You do what you do, and I'll do what I do.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Baker:** I'm hoping those pernicious influences are diminishing. I don't think it's . . .

**Jones:** I hope so, too, because it's narrow-minded.

**Baker:** It's just blind.

**Jones:** I used to be like that, because I was the hard-core, black-belt, bebop mentality, and anything that didn't hit that thing was da-da-da-da, forget about it. I'm not like that. It ain't going to be like that. Not if you can do it. If you can break – you can do anything you can when you can break out of the box, anything you're capable of doing. I'm very proud of it. I really am, because I know in the jazz special that Ken Burns did, a lot of people were hurt. He called me first to do that. I said, "How long does it take, Ken?" He said, "Three years." "Can't do it." So he went with Stanley Crouch. The last two hours covered 40 people. Benny Carter was – one of the biggest, the hurtful things that ever happened to him. He told me – he expressed it to me many times. They loped all these guys into the last two hours, and they – well, I won't get into that, because it's – you know what's up.

**Baker:** Yeah. That was ridiculous, is what it was.

**Jones:** Anyway, you can't – they can't write me out of history, or anybody else. You can't write Benny Carter out of history. What is, is what is. That's somebody else's problem.

**Baker:** I thank God – I thank the good Lord that they cannot go back, like George Orwell's 1986 or whatever the hell it was, and rewrite – and be revisionists about history. That's why this oral history thing is so important.

**Jones:** Exactly. That's one thing I think about all the time. I don't give a damn what governmental control, no matter how sophisticated it gets – they can never go back and say, 1876 had this, 1951 had this, and 1964 had this, because it's in the universe. You can't even see it. It's hanging there out in the clouds, and the people who were at that time, they will never lose – there's millions and millions of people are holding it and preserving it in every era – the era of the string quartet, the era of the string bass, then the bass or whatever. That's divinity.

**Baker:** I think that's one of the governing reasons why it is so important to have the people who made these things happen, on record, because they used to wait until it was too late. Because they're saying, if you start at 65, there are people who don't make it to 45. Now the interviews are starting so much earlier, so that you don't miss – if a Clifford Brown comes along, you don't miss . . .

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Jones:** 25 years old we lost him. Imagine what he would have been 40? He was a killer at 20. We were the ones – I remember us begging Hamp. We heard him with Tiny Bradshaw first. I think Coltrane was with him too.

**Baker:** That's what you said.

**Jones:** Yeah. Then when we saw Tadd Dameron in Atlantic City, and he went in Tadd's band – Gigi, Benny Golson, and Clifford. We said, "Hamp, please. Take my salary." Whatever it is. It was \$17 a night. "Just get these guys, please." And he got the three of them. I love Hamp for that. I sit next to Brownie for a year. It was like an experience beyond description. Art Farmer. And Benny.

**Baker:** They were taken away from us too early.

**Jones:** Hmm?

**Baker:** They were taken away from us way too early.

**Jones:** Yeah, they were. Benny's still here.

**Baker:** Oh yes. Well, that's good. There's that.

**Jones:** And in good shape too.

**Baker:** The power of music.

**Jones:** That's right. Well, God bless you, David.

**Baker:** God bless you, my good friend. And thank . . .

**Jones:** And I thank you for a beautiful, beautiful friendship that will go on and on.

**Baker:** I hope we got a lot of years in front of us.

**Jones:** That's right. Say when it rains, get wet.

(transcribed and edited by Barry Kernfeld)

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

