

# Dialogues

## Bossa Nova, Bebop And Beethoven

### Quincy Jones and Frank Cody have a heart to heart

**Q**uincy Jones' talents have shaped much of the music of our time. As an arranger, composer, producer, conductor, broadcast operator and music industry executive, Jones is a giant in the world of jazz and music in general. In 1964, he became the first African American to hold the position of Vice President at a major record label, Mercury. Frank Cody is a longtime radio programmer who was central to the launch of the NAC/Smooth Jazz format at KTWV (The Wave)/Los Angeles in 1987. Today, he is CEO of Broadcast Architecture, the consultancy that has helped guide the format to unparalleled success. He is also a knowledgeable music lover with a bent for jazz of all stripes.

**QJ:** Did you start The Wave?

**FC:** I was there with the team that started it, a whole bunch of us.

**QJ:** I was on board with The Wave from day one, 'cause you just want to go to one station you can trust and know it's going to be mellow. How old is that station?

**FC:** It was started in '87.

**QJ:** I was with you all the way.

**FC:** When I was 15 and just getting into radio, I was infatuated with this tune, "It's My Party," by Leslie Gore. The arrangement was so cool.

**QJ:** It was the first pop record I made.

**FC:** I backtracked your career from that song, and I was amazed to find that your deep roots were in jazz.

**QJ:** I started playing in clubs in Seattle during World War II, when I was 12 or 13 years old. Ray Charles came out when he was 16; I met him when I was 14. During the war, Seattle was the wildest city in America. It was jumpin'! We played from 10 to 1 in tennis clubs, with all those white cardigans and a room full of roses. Later, we'd go to the black clubs, play rhythm and blues, do jokes, play for strippers. At 3am, we'd go to Jackson Street and play bebop all night. We had to play every kind of music on the planet. We were really hip then and always wanted to make everything sound like bebop, but Ray always used to tell us, "No, you've gotta be true to each genre. It has its own soul. If you go with its soul, it'll always be good." I never forget that.

**FC:** So you knew Ray as a kid.

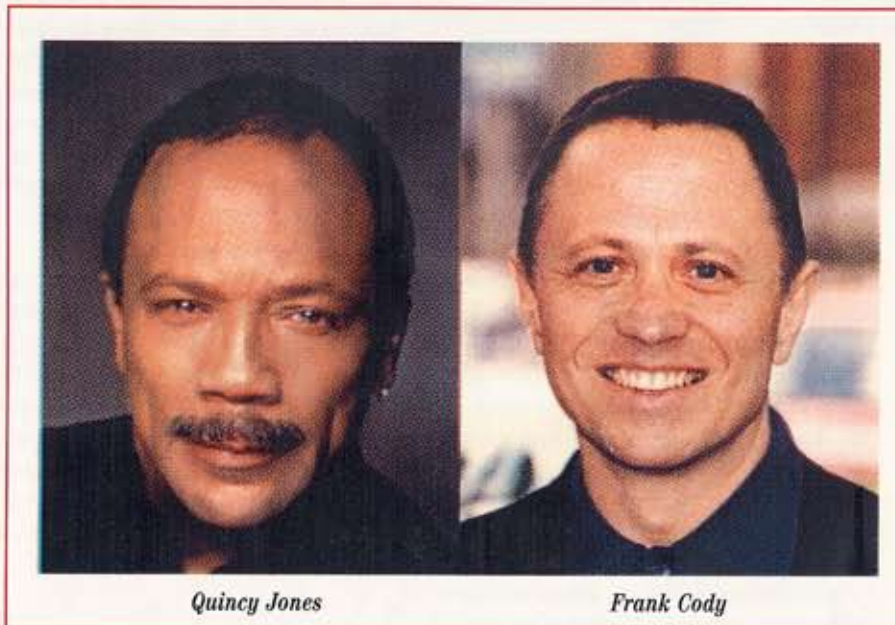
**QJ:** We still talk to each other every day, and our friendship is more precious now than ever. Jesus, 53 years! It's something we hold on to; we've done all our dreams together. We did *Heat of the Night* together; he asked me to write a commemorative piece for his 25th anniversary with the Houston Symphony and Choir; and "We Are the World." It's been an amazing journey for the two of us.

**FC:** You are one of the most influential people in pop music this century. Run down some of the people you arranged for in the beginning.

**QJ:** I played with Bugs Blackwell's band, the guy who found Little Richard and Sam Cooke, when I was 14. We played with Billie Holiday that year, then with Billy Eckstein when I was 15; Bobby Tucker was music director for both. He is the character Rich-

**Musicians go from their subconscious and follow the soul around – just feel it out – until God sends that message down, and then they start to compose.**

*Quincy Jones*



*Quincy Jones*

*Frank Cody*

**If intelligent life came to Earth and looked around, they'd say, "Oh, it's a shame what they do to each other. They kill and enslave their fellow beings, create pain and suffering. And look what they've done to their planet; they don't take care of it as they know in their hearts they should. But their music! Have you heard their music?"**

*Frank Cody*

ard Pryor played in *Lady Sings the Blues* and was one of my closest friends. After that, it was Dinah Washington – you name it – Big Maybelle, Diana Ross, Roberta Flack, Peggy Lee, everybody. We did an album with Basie and Ella and many albums with Sarah Vaughn. I did the arrangement on Errol

Garner's "Misty" in Paris. Johnny Mathis cut it two years later.

**FC:** Something significant for me was being swept up in the bossa nova movement, a combination of American pop and samba. This incredible movement happening in Brazil exploded in America. You did something called

*Big Band Bossa Nova.*

**QJ:** We were there when it started. In '56, after we did the Far East, the State Department sent us down to Buenos Aires to play with Dizzy Gillespie's band. We saw Lalo Schifrin in a club – he was about 18 – and Dizzy told him if he got to the States, he could play with him. Lalo told us about a couple of kids, Joao and Astrud Gilberto. When Dizzy played with a local rhythm section one afternoon on Copacabana Beach, Joao and Astrud were in the front row. When we got back, we cut the *Big Band Bossa Nova* record. Jesus, you see all these incredible changes and eras go by. I just turned 66 and it's like the *Star Wars* of rocket rides! The body doesn't agree, but I feel 15.

**FC:** Just as bossa nova was an amalgam of styles, that's what happened in jazz. There's a semantic issue of what deserves to be included under its banner – traditional jazz, contemporary jazz and smooth jazz.

**QJ:** It's a sensibility, an attitude. That's why I say the relationship between bebop and hip-hop is close – not on the surface, but subliminally. They are totally different kinds of music, but with the same sensibility.

**FC:** Maybe you can give radio programmers a bit of advice: How do you get performers loose and relaxed so it flows out of them?

**QJ:** The key words are love and respect. You should only go into the studio with somebody you really love and a person who loves you too. If you have any disaffection, it falls apart immediately, because the demands on the trust are too great. It's an intimate relationship. You're tested all the way to find out if you know what's going on. As an arranger or composer, it's easy, because you can relate to an artist on all levels. That's why you're working with them in the first place. You have a common bond. You're in a position to create a canvas they can't resist that wraps around their soul.

That's the part I love the most in collaboration: to truly, totally surrender to what the artist is about and let it go where they are going. You feel the trust with each other. Many times, you are asking them to jump without a net. With someone very good, they do that on their own. With someone like Sinatra, who's done everything, in that situation, like the last record we did, "Mack the



# Dialogues

## Bossa Nova, Bebop And Beethoven

Continued from Page 38

Knife," he got all the way into it. There's no experience like it. It's like a love affair.

**FC:** How do you rein someone in without breaking their spirit?

**QJ:** You have to present it to them in a way that's emotionally logical. That's abstract, I know.

**FC:** No, emotionally logical. It's a tremendous grace and a gift to be able to create that atmosphere and instill confidence in artists so they can let it flow through them.

**FC:** That's because listeners respond to it; they love it. Great music is like fine wine: It gets better with time; it's for the ages.

**QJ:** Every time I hear that piano solo on *The Wave*, it's something that can withstand routinability.

**FC:** Who have you wanted to work with, but never have?

**QJ:** My biggest one was Marvin. We talked about it for 17 years. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think he would go before me. The one today would be Whitney. I love her. I've never worked with Dionne Warwick, ei-

Just as bossa nova was an amalgam of styles, that's what happened in jazz. There's a semantic issue of what deserves to be considered under its banner — traditional jazz, contemporary jazz, smooth jazz.

Frank Cody

**QJ:** Music is such an abstract, but highly emotional way to communicate.

**FC:** Your latest project, *from q with love*, started as a birthday gift for Oprah Winfrey.

**QJ:** Way before that, I used to take a tape of it on the road just to have my little portable vibe with me. I had worked with a diversified roster, so to make the tape, I could grab almost anything the emotion demanded. I wanted to give Oprah something I loved, so I made up 40 nice receiving packages with the guest list and the menu on it for her guests.

**FC:** Tell me about some of the artists on it.

**QJ:** We did this real magical thing with Aretha in 1972, where there was a golden aura over the whole room. She was on piano, and you couldn't stop it; it had its own life. We never knew when she was gonna come in on the downbeat, and she never did. She just totally interpreted it and let a divine thing happen. Then there was Luther in 1977, before anyone knew who he was. He was singing commercials and background when we first did him. And Patti Austin and on to James Ingram. Patti's my goddaughter. She's always been someone from another planet in terms of musicianship, pitch, sound control, the soul, everything. There are things from Tevin Campbell, who was 12 — he's an amazing singer; R. Kelly; this new kid my daughter found, Catero; Brandy; Heavy D. After Oprah's party I kept getting calls saying, "I need copies for my 16-year-old niece and my aunt, who's 63." Three generations are into it. Isn't that amazing?

**FC:** There are some standards for Smooth Jazz: "One Hundred Ways," "Baby Come to Me."

**QJ:** For the past five years, *The Wave* has played "Just Once" at least five days a week. It's unbelievable! Sometimes I bet with my

ther, and I think she's great.

[*The two discuss Jones' days at Berklee, then his studies with Nadia Boulanger, the eminent pianist who once turned down George Gershwin as a student, and Jones' interest in modern classical composers like Alban Berg, Stravinsky and Schoenberg.*]

**QJ:** The whole menu of the finest of all kinds of music, I love what that's about. It's like having a taste for food. I have a strong connection to food, and when I cook, I think about orchestration.

**FC:** You hear the flavors in your mind as they relate to sounds and instruments.

**QJ:** Another thing that's always fascinated me is how some people know that it's not "it" yet. Writing and arranging, you try one time, three times, and when you get to the 18th or 27th time, how do you know there's another layer? I ask myself, "What would Duke Ellington have done here? Bill Evans? Mozart?" Because there are only 12 notes. You've got all these choices, and until you make the decisions, then and only then do you get your freedom. You constantly set up parameters, and even when it's the free-est, you have parameters to where you go musically. It's truly emotional, but it's soul and science.

**FC:** That's a phrase we use about radio, that it's a balance of art and science, combining the two to reach people. Mozart was very proud of the fact that he wrote melodies that reached sophisticated people who were well-educated about music as well as the common people. Some say smooth jazz is not jazz, but what is jazz? Bach improvised. Mozart wrote passages that were purposely sparse so that when he performed them, he could improvise. Is that jazz?

**QJ:** People get confused about this. They

doesn't read music." Reading music has nothing to do with creating it! It's a form of communication, that's all. Musicians go from their subconscious and follow the soul around — just feel it out — until God sends that message down, and then they start to compose. You're dealing with master shots then, and close in on it emotionally. I go by goose bumps. When they hit me, I know I'm on the right track.

**FC:** I'd love to see you team up with Joni Mitchell. When she told the painter Georgia O'Keeffe that as a painter O'Keeffe could make music, O'Keeffe was astounded. Joni's someone who has pursued all the arts to every degree: a master lyricist, painting — she's gone in so many directions. You share a similar perspective on how art doesn't have boundaries.

**QJ:** All the arts speak to each other; it's all coming from the same place. That's why I wanted to do movies since I was 14. The combination of sight and sound, boy, it's the greatest trip in the world.

**FC:** You produced *The Color Purple* with Steven Spielberg.

**QJ:** Working with him for three and a half months was like going to a university a year every day. Now, we're working on the millennium for Washington, DC.

**FC:** You head one of the largest minority-owned broadcasting companies in America. How are things going with Qwest Broadcasting?

**QJ:** The New Orleans station, WNTL-TV, is moving into new quarters. It's the WB Network's biggest station; they broke *Dawson's Creek*. All of it is an incredible experience, because if you get into water that's too deep, it stretches you, and you have to either sink or swim.

**FC:** And you like the deep end.

**QJ:** Oh, I really love it, because doing the same thing over and over again would bore me. But I always come back to each thing, and it's like the first time I experienced it. I'm in the process of writing a Broadway show on Sammy Davis' life. Some people have an irrational confidence in the future. I know it's going to work out all right. If you stay in the zone of dealing with the divinity in this stuff,

things were working when we could stand for something, when that power was flowing through it. It's not a small piece of advice you give people, to stay in that zone where they really believe in what they do.

**QJ:** If you do that, you get touched by it every time. I tell my own kids, "Don't ever chase the money, man." You could pile money up next to a piano, and the money and the piano don't even speak to each other. I'm talking about B-flat, not \$5. I have a line that I will not cross in making pop music. No matter the ability of the artist, if they're sincere, that's the most commercial aspect of the music.

**FC:** I've got to let you go so we can both have dinner.

**QJ:** Fixing a meal is the best gift you can give somebody, a part of your soul.

**FC:** I read that Leonard Bernstein would prefer not to eat rather than have a meal alone. He wanted to share the experience and talk.

**QJ:** He was really a wild guy, man.

**FC:** What was he like?

**QJ:** He was everything, totally 360. Young, interested — his curiosity was awesome. He loved jazz, and he loved the slang. We were in Rome once, and he was trying to get me to teach him how to say, "Your mama," so if a cellist said to him, "Mr. Bernstein, your downbeat of part 41 was a little flabby," he could say, "Your mama." He kept getting it mixed up with "Yo Yo Ma." Seven of us were on a private tour of the Sistine Chapel, and there was a sign forbidding you to lie on the floor. But here we are — me, my daughter, Bernstein, some friends. A monsignor comes in, sees us on the floor and starts yelling in Italian. Bernstein says, "Your mama." We had beautiful fun with him.

**FC:** The first LP I bought was *West Side Story*, which he composed. I just saw a revival of it in London, and it was just as fresh now as when he wrote it.

**QJ:** There was nobody like him. That score was one of the most magical things that ever hit theater.

**FC:** How about that piece "Quintet," where there are five different melodies going at once?

**QJ:** He was so fascinated by all genres of music.

That's the part I love the most in collaboration: to truly, totally surrender to what the artist is about and let it go where they are going.

Quincy Jones

not getting your ego hung up in it, you can go on forever. It's not about us. We're terminals, and it all comes through us, because it's all out there anyway. Outside of his musical gift, Beethoven's greatest talent was his ability to remain cool when the raging fires of creativity burned in him. That's the big lesson, not to get carried away. You must have recognized a need, though, to create in *The Wave* this spot where it's cool, warm and inviting.

**FC:** One of the driving forces in launching the format was to raise awareness and consciousness. And to get music on the air that people loved and that would help them feel

**FC:** I can't thank you enough for all you've given us in music. Smooth Jazz stations owe you a debt of gratitude for the contribution you've made to all the great music that is played on all the stations. I have an idea that if intelligent life came to Earth and looked around, they'd say, "Oh, it's a shame what they do to each other. They kill and enslave their fellow beings, create pain and suffering. And look at what they've done to their planet; they don't take care of it as they know in their hearts they should. *But their music! Have you heard their music?*"

**QJ:** Thank you, Frank. Man, you're a gra-