

George T. Wein Biography

Jazz impresario George Wein is considered to be as much a legend as his festivals. In addition to operating his company, Festival Productions, Inc., which staffs offices in six cities and produces hundreds of music events year, Mr. Wein is the person responsible for the Newport Jazz Festival – an event that started the "festival era," according to jazz critic Leonard Feather. Today Wein has as much creative fuel as he did when he started that festival almost fifty years ago.

George Wein adds the title of author to his long list of accomplishments with Myself Among Others: A Life in Music, his long-awaited memoir written with Nate Chinen and published by DaCapo Press in the spring of 2003. He has known all of the greatest musicians in jazz and has worked in folk, pop, gospel and every other musical genre. He continues to build friendships with today's entertainers and industry leaders, always keeping integrity and quality music in the forefront of his relationships. According to NPR's review of the book, "His name is as synonymous with jazz as many of its leading artists ... and now after 50 years, he's telling his story." And, what a story there is to tell!

In 2003, festivals will be presented in a host of cities throughout the world, including The New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, now in its 33rd year; the Playboy Jazz Festival at the Hollywood Bowl; the Freihofer's Jazz Festival in Saratoga, NY; the Apple & Eve Newport Folk Festival; the Essence Music Festival at the New Orleans Superdome; and JVC Jazz Festivals in New York City, Newport, RI, Concord and Hollywood, CA; JVC Jazz Festival in The Hague and Paris and the Verizon Music Festival in New York, Tampa Bay, Los Angeles and Washington, DC.

George Wein pioneered the concept of sponsor association with music events, such as the Schlitz Salute to Jazz and the Kool Jazz Festivals. Wein was the first to give the sponsor the title presentation that guaranteed mention of the sponsor's name in publicity and promotion.

Among the awards Mr. Wein has received are Chevalier of the French Legion of Honor; Commandeur de L'Ordre des Arts et Lettres; the 1999 Da Capo Foundation Lifetime Achievement Award for Cultural Innovation (along with Mikhail Gorbachev, Zubin Mehta and Michael DeBakey); the Frederick Douglass Award from the New York Urban League; the Gold Medal Award from the National Arts Club and honorary degrees from Rhode Island College and Berklee College of Music. Mr. Wein has been recognized by Presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton at two White House celebrations of

the 25th and 40th anniversaries of the Newport Jazz Festival. He is a member of the Board of Trustees of Carnegie Hall, the Apollo Theatre Foundation and Jazz at Lincoln Center.

On July 17, 1954, Wein created the world's first all-jazz festival in Newport, Rhode Island, with the support of Louis and Elaine Lorillard. Crowds of Newport elitists, pure jazz lovers, some of the greatest musicians in history and a host of curious spectators gathered at the first event that was to crown Wein's empire of festivals.

The Newport Jazz Festival has survived triumphantly through the decades and is the role model for most of the world's music festivals. In 1962, Wein organized the Newport Folk Festival and created the Ohio Valley Jazz Festival. Four years later, the Boston Globe Jazz Festival and the Newport Opera Festival were invented. In 1968, Mr. Wein created the Hampton Jazz Festival, and in 1972, the Newport Jazz Festival moved to New York City.

The following year he formed the New York Jazz Repertory Company, which performed several seasons of concerts at Carnegie Hall and was the forerunner of the jazz programs of the Smithsonian Jazz Orchestra and Jazz at Lincoln Center. Wein created the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band in 1992, which had a regular subscription series in New York and toured throughout the United States and abroad until fall 2002.

When Mr. Wein created the Grande Parade du Jazz in Nice in 1974 there was only one other jazz festival in France, which was held in the city of Antibes. Now there are dozens of jazz festivals in many towns in France that have greatly added to the summer cultural and economic life. This became possible because the hundreds of musicians who came to Nice became available to interested jazz entrepreneurs all over France.

He expanded the Newport Jazz Festival-New York to Saratoga in 1978 and created the Playboy Jazz Festival in Los Angeles. The Budweiser Newport Jazz Festival was born in Madarao, Japan, in 1981, while the Kool Jazz Festival toured 20 cities across the United States a year later. In 1984, JVC became the title sponsor of the Newport Jazz Festival, which is held in several venues in the United States and Europe.

Throughout the years, Wein continued performing. A jazz purist from the schools of Louis Armstrong, Basie and Ellington, Mr. Wein enjoys playing classic jazz with his group, the Newport Jazz Festival All-Stars. The band has toured worldwide and has made many recordings.

George Wein and his wife, Joyce, divide their time between an apartment in New York City and a villa in the south of France. Collectively, their homes are furnished with a stunning fine-arts collection, while the cellars show his predilection for fine wines.

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