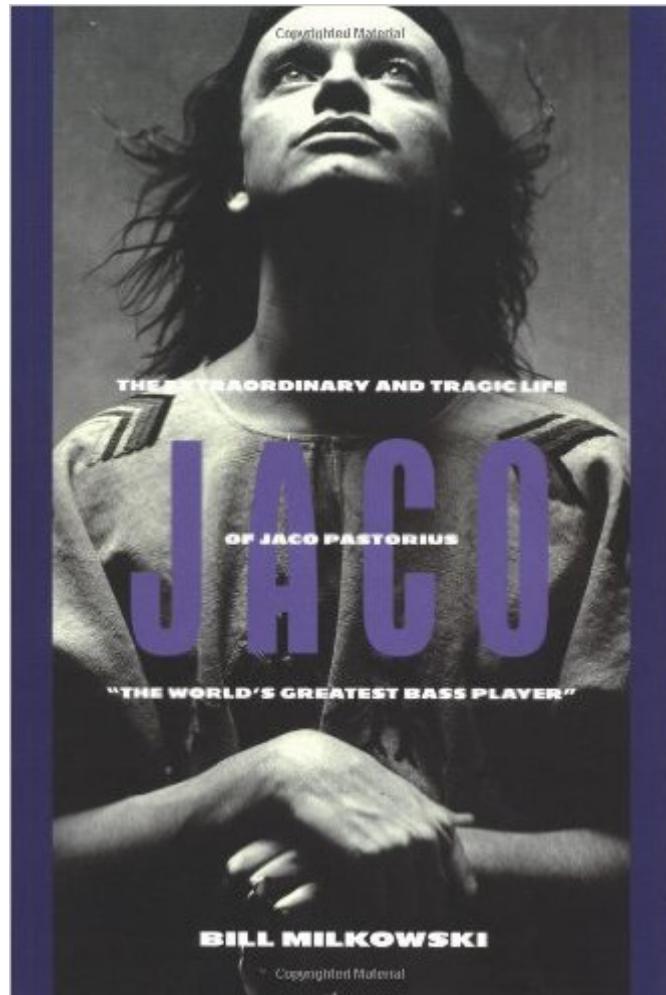


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# Jaco



## Synopsis

Like his heroes Charlie Parker and Jimi Hendrix, Jaco didn't make it to age 40. But by the time he died at 35, he had reinvented the role of the electric bass and had become one of the most potent forces in modern music. This biography chronicles his entire career, including his rise to global stardom with Weather Report, his solo career, and his slow professional and personal decline.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

There is no doubt that Jaco was the baddest cat ever to sling an electric bass around his shoulder. The proof is in the pudding: check out any of his recordings, and you will hear a master of the groove like no other. Dazzling technique, yet so darned FUNKY! Having read biographies of Charlie Parker, I was struck by the similarities between the two who died far too young. Both lived to excess and died as a result of their debilitating addictions. And both turned the jazz world on its ear with their exhilarating innovations. I found this book to be pretty inspirational, at least in terms of Jaco's virtuosity. It is also an interesting tale about how NOT to live. Nevertheless, I found Milkowski's style to be more like a lengthy DownBeat article than what one might expect in a 200+ page biography. I wish that he had probed Jaco's psychological problems more, offering some more in-depth analysis on what led him to such a self-destructive lifestyle. Rather, he spends little time on the precursors of Jaco's mental illness, and prefers to give anecdotes and concrete examples of his drug and alcohol problems. True, he goes into some explicit detail about Jaco's binges, but says far too little about Jaco's severely pathological narcissism, which seems to have fueled his frustrations.

What led to Jaco's grandiosity? Truly, he had a world class personality disorder, yet Milkowski pretty much ignores this. Maybe I expect too much; Milkowski is a music writer, not a shrink, but when psychopathology is so extreme, I think a more analytical account is more than warranted. Maybe someone else will eventually tackle the psyche of who Peter Erskine's psychiatrist father described to a fellow psychiatrist upon Jaco's stay at Bellevue, "the most challenging case you will ever see." But all that aside, the book is a quick and enjoyable read, and anything about Jaco is probably worthwhile.

.....Milkowski's book is an effort that should be applauded by all who pick up its pages. When I first looked at the intro to the book, I found it a fascinating look into the genius and tragedy of this landmark musician. Unlike others, who have stated that the book falls short in examining Jaco's psychological short comings and mental closet skeletons, I found the read not to be wanting in any area describing his life. Not only is it a book that I feel is mandatory reading for any music lover.....it is a book that even the non musician can appreciate as well. The shock and sadness in which the stories unfold make the subject of Jaco as a performer simply a compelling story which the reader begins to empathize with Jaco but feels the same helplessness as those within the book while reading along to the inevitable conclusion. An easy read, and I've read that book at least 3 or 4 times and still pick it up to refer to some of the profound statements and observation about not only Jaco's life.....but the with human experience in all of us as well...Finally, this book (as a screenplay) would make an unbelievable movie ....Kudos to Bill.....RIP Jaco

Mr. Milkowski did a marvelous job of telling the story of "The World's Greatest Bass Player". It made me sad to read, though. I gave this review the title "Heartbreaking" because I knew Jaco. We were not close friends, but I used to run into him often; we both lived in New York City. Now, everyone who lived in NYC at the time had a "Jaco Story"; some outrageous anecdote of his antics. But I'd like to share something a bit different. One night Jaco and I were hanging out in the Village. He and I were talking, mostly about music. But in the midst of the conversation, he told me "You know, I tell people that I like to party and take chances; but the truth is I wish I could give up drinking and drugs. But I don't know how". I didn't know what to tell him, and I don't remember how I replied; nor can I say what prompted him to say this to me. Four years later he left town and never returned. Despite his demons and his sickness; in addition to Jaco being an astonishing musician, he was, when he was "himself", a really nice and likeable guy.

Jaco was the greatest bass player the world has ever known. I met him when I got to NYU; he gave a friend bass lessons in the mid 1980's; we listen to him in the park between classes whenever he was plugged in; he played basketball in the neighborhood, and made collect calls to Paul Butterfield from the Red Lion to goof on him. He was the certainly the candle that burned brightest downtown. And when he jammed in at the Lone Star when it was on 5th avenue, it would burn your hair off! The guy would jump from table to table with a wireless, fretless bass running riffs that were just the most remarkable thing you could ever hear (check him out on Joni Mitchel's Live album with Pat Metheny and M. Brecker). He also got caught up in hard drugs, and it was sad to watch him around Washington Square between classes, as he was falling apart. And when my neighbor, a bar back at the Hard Rock at the time, came home to tell me who his new bass teacher was, I almost fell down. He'd use the small change to get fixed. When he died, we were sick all day. I am so glad this book was written, and with that title because it is certainly true. And I am the frustrated musician who would know! RIP Jaco-- GREAT Title!

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