USA

Clarence Alexander Before: Tribute to the Godfather of the Music Industry

Le monde a perdu un autre homme incroyable. Notre famille a également perdu un ami, un confident et un mentor. Ses contributions ont changé des vies pour des générations. Nous sommes reconnaissants que l'héritage du "Parrain" survivra à travers eux pour des générations.

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Today we take the time to celebrate the life of Clarence Alexander Avant, also known as The Godfather, who passed away on August 13, 2023.

The dictionary **Merriam-Webster** defines the word Godfather as one who founds, supports, or inspires. Synonyms for the word Godfather include mentor, guide, shepherd, show, direct, foster, nurture, and cultivate. It's hard to imagine a single person embodying this word and descriptions across multiple worlds, but this word accurately defines our friend, confidant, and mentor, **Clarence Alexander Avant**.

Clarence Avant was born in the segregated town of Climax, North Carolina, in 1931, the eldest of eight children. There were few

opportunities in Climax for someone like **Clarence**, so he dropped out of school at the age of sixteen (16) and moved to New Jersey. After a few odd jobs here and there, **Clarence** got the opportunities he hoped for by becoming the manager of the **Teddy P's Lounge** in Newark, New Jersey, and **Joseph Glaser**, the long-time manager of **Louis Armstrong**. From there, **Mr. Avant** began to manage **Little Willie John**, a blues artist, the jazz singer **Sarah Vaughn**, the pioneer of rock and roll **Tom Wilson**, and the pianist-composer **Lalo Schifrin** from Argentina.

Businessman

In November 1943, **Clarence** based **Consolidated Booking** and **Associated Booking**.

Before first met **Quincy Jones**, who was the first black man to serve as vice president in a **record company (Mercury)**, while managing **Smith**. Where other jazz artists were getting 100,000 $, **Before** asked for 45,0000 $ for **Smith**, and the bold number impressed **Jones**. **Before** ended up signing **Smith** has **Verve Records** for a significant sum.*He went and got the deal*" he recalls **Jones** later. "*I respected him for that.*»

It was the first of several corporations, such as **Avant Garde Enterprises**, which he opened in November 1962, with offices on the West Coast in September 1964. **Clarence** moved to Beverly Hills, California, to join **Venture Records**, the first joint venture between an African-American record company and a major (**MGM**), in 1967.

After the closure of **Venture Records** by **MGM** , **Clarence Avant** based **Sussex Records** in 1969, where **Bill Withers** marks its success.

And, in 1971, he founded **Avant Garde Broadcasting**, which he uses to buy **KAGB-FM** , the first African-American FM station in Los Angeles.

In January 1976, **Clarence** spear **Tabu Records**, which signs artists like **The SOS Band**, **Alexander O'Neal** and **Cherrelle**.

In 1993, **Clarence** is appointed president of **Motown Records** and heads the editorial branch of **Avant-Garde Music** until its sale to **Universal Music Group** in 2018.

Advise

The influence of **Clarence Avant** has guided and inspired musical artists and executives over the years. The lives he has touched read like a Who's Who of entertainment: **Quincy Jones**, **David Geffen**, **Jay-Z**, **Jimmy Jam** & **Terry Lewis**, **Pharrell Williams**, **Whitney Houston, Kenny “Babyface” Edmonds**, **Queen Latifah**, **Sean Combs**, **Snoop Dogg**, **Jamie Foxx**, among others.



The power of **Clarence Avant** was not limited to the music industry. He understood the importance of politics and had access to people in the highest offices, whether Democrat or Republican. He served as an advisor to the president **George HW Bush**, and he had close ties to and raised funds for former presidents **Jimmy Carter**, **Bill Clinton** and **Barack Obama**.

Community Leader

Living in New York, **Clarence** was a member of the board of directors of the **National Association of Radio Announcers** and of the **Apollo Theatre Foundation**. In Los Angeles, he served on the board of directors of the **United Way**, of **Los Angeles World Affairs Council**, of the **Brotherhood Crusade** and of the **NAACP**. We also had the privilege of having him as a member of the Board of Directors of the **Los Angeles Urban League**.

Jamie Foxx, **Jimmy Jam Harris**, **Terry Lewis**, **Quincy Jones**s and **Bill Withers** unveiled the star of **Clarence Avant** on the **Hollywood Walk of Fame** in October 2016. He received the **President's Merit Award** as a Grammy icon at the pre-Grammy gala in **Clive Davis** in 2018. The **Rock and Roll Hall of Fame** inducted **Clarence Avant** in the 2021 class of **Rock and Roll Hall of Fame**.

Clarence was also a family man. He and his wife, **Jacqueline** "**Jackie**", were together for 54 years until his untimely death during a home burglary in 2021. They are survived by their two (2) adult children, Nicole and Alexander.

The world has lost another incredible man. Our family has also lost a friend, confidant, and mentor. His contributions changed lives for generations. We are grateful that the legacy of the "*Godfather*" will survive through them for generations.

Our condolences and prayers go out to all his loved ones.



Photo: Billboard

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