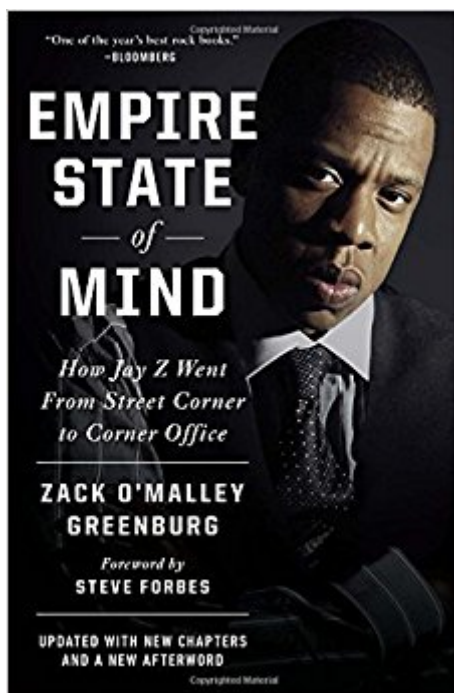


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Empire State Of Mind: How Jay Z Went From Street Corner To Corner Office, Revised Edition



Synopsis

"I'm not a businessman. I'm a business, man." As much as Martha Stewart or Oprah and perhaps more than any musician, Jay Z has turned himself into a lifestyle. You can wake up to the local radio station playing his newest hit, spritz yourself with his latest cologne, slip on a pair of his Rocawear jeans, lace up your Reebok S. Carter sneakers, watch baseball star Robinson Cano smack a couple of hits in an afternoon game, and grab dinner at The Spotted Pig. On the way to Jay Z's 40/40 Club for a UssÃ© cognac nightcap, sign up for streaming service Tidal and hear his latest collaboration with BeyoncÃ©. He'll profit at every turn of your day. Empire State of Mind reveals the story behind Jay Z's rise as told by the people who lived it with him, from classmates at Brooklyn's George Westinghouse High School and the childhood friend who got him into the drug trade, to the DJ who persuaded him to stop dealing and focus on the music. Now with new interviews with industry insiders like Russell Simmons, Alicia Keys, and J. Cole more than one hundred in total, this book explains just how Jay Z propelled himself from the bleak streets of Brooklyn to the heights of the business world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

With "Empire State of Mind," Zack O'Malley Greenburg delivers on his promise to chronicle Jay-Z's compelling journey from drug-dealer to 9-figure businessman. As it turns out, Greenburg pitched the book to Jay-Z's management, but they refused to participate and instead went on to write "Decoded" so they could profit directly. "Decoded" reads like one of those Donald Trump

autobiographies: a very self-congratulatory, shallow look into how he thinks (which is somewhat valuable in its own right), but devoid of any juicy revelation beneath the surface. "Empire State of Mind," on the other hand, paints a very nuanced picture of Jay-Z's character and gives detailed insight into his major business decisions, including the flops and near-misses that Jay-Z doesn't seem to talk about publicly. If you want direct testimony from key players in Jay-Z's early life, including former business partner Damon Dash, former mentor Jaz-O, and Dehaven Irby (the guy who introduced Jay-Z to drug-dealing), this is probably the only place you'll be able to find it, since most of them have fallen out and don't talk to him anymore. Greenburg has done a metric ton of research and reconnaissance work, yet his prose flows smooth like Jay-Z's rhymes. The end result is a fascinating read. Highly recommended.

Put simply, this book is a wonderful, engaging profile of a figure worth reading about, and will teach even hip-hop devotees something about Mr. Carter they did not know before. Jay-Z is naturally an intriguing figure, part-musician, part-former hustler, part-executive - just to name a few of the roles he has played. Yet Greenburg - to his credit - does more than simply kowtow to the great lyricist. Greenburg digs further to paint a comprehensive, inquiring, insightful and often less-than-flattering view of one of the great entrepreneurs of the last 50 years. Greenburg's book reveals Jay's obvious successes, to be sure: rising from dealing in Brooklyn to a career as a recording artist, a successful turn atop Def Jam Records, a happy marriage with Beyonce. But Greenburg also covers those items Jay doesn't want you to know about: a covert deal to profit from Armand de Brignac champagne; a failed attempt at making a basketball documentary; an aborted effort to release a Jay-Z edition Jeep; and repeated failures as part-owner of the Nets. Greenburg's warranted conclusion is that Jay-Z is a tremendous businessman and individual. The unique piece Greenburg brings to this story is that Jay came to this success through a portfolio approach, dabbling in so many different industries and fields that while some ventures flopped (see: LeBron in South Beach), many others have resulted in unprecedented revenue and publicity (see: Live Nation). Jay would have you know nothing of those failures. Fortunately, Greenburg thinks otherwise. Do yourself a favor: Read this book.

I didn't know much about Jay-Z before I read this book. Once I started reading, though, I couldn't put it down. Greenburg paints such a thorough picture of Jay-Z without once interviewing him, and I would guess that these multiple perspectives provide a better picture of the man than the man himself could (or would want to, it seems). I came away suddenly inspired to start listening - really

actually LISTENING, not just passively hearing - Jay-Z's music, because now I realize it has a legitimate and meaningful context. I would imagine that for someone who is already a big fan, this book would be even more engrossing. Jay-Z has had a powerful impact on the hip-hop industry, and he is poised to become a music and business legend. That said, I should point out that what ultimately made this book enjoyable was how well-written it was, with a touch of humor here and there (in well-placed quotes from Greenburg's sources) and a persistently neutral tone. Should we like Jay-Z? Maybe not. Should we respect him? Well, how can you avoid it? When you finally put the book down, how can you not want to be just a little bit more like him?

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