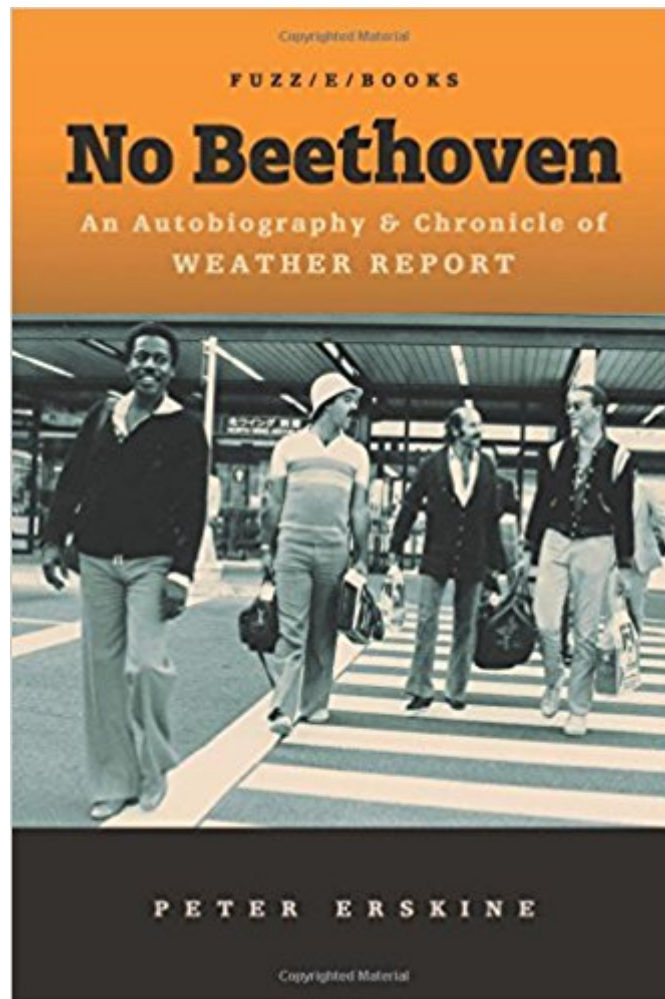


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No Beethoven: An Autobiography & Chronicle Of Weather Report



Synopsis

No Beethoven chronicles the life and times of drummer Peter Erskine, with the legendary band Weather Report being the nexus to this first-hand account. Erskine was in the midst of the modern American jazz music scene as it underwent its most dynamic change. Peter Erskine is a musician of his times with incredibly rich stories to tell in this autobiography. Including never-before published photographs. No Beethoven includes chapters dedicated to Weather Report and the musicians Joe Zawinul, Jaco Pastorius, and Wayne Shorter, plus the bands Steps Ahead, Steely Dan, and artists such as Elvin Jones, Joni Mitchell, Freddie Hubbard, Diana Krall, Steve Gadd, producer Manfred Eicher, composers John Williams, and Mark-Anthony Turnage, et al. The book provides a revealing look at the creative process involved in performing music on-stage and in the recording studio, as well as a behind-the-scenes look at how the musical instrument industry operates. This is a book for all musicians and fans of music. As famed drummer and Rush founder Neil Peart writes: No Beethoven is among the best musical autobiographies I have read. Peter's story is absorbing and compelling, full of well-drawn characters and incidents both humorous and serious. It flows with the same ease and naturalness as his drumming, and under that good-humored gloss, it conveys the same profundity of experience and ideas. This book should be read not only by every drummer, but by every musician. Even amateurs of music performance will find it entertaining and worthwhile.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Delighted that "No Beethoven" is now available to Kindle readers. Even though I have an iPad --

and created the original Enhanced Edition of the book for iPad -- the Kindle is my "go to" device for reading. Aided by designer Kio Griffith and the terrific technology team at Alfred Music, we've replicated the paperback edition plus added many more photos (and all photos can be enlarged by tapping on them). The photos -- just like the stories -- come from my archive of fortunate experience getting to play with such groups as Weather Report, Steps Ahead, Steely Dan, the Stan Kenton and Maynard Ferguson big bands, and artists like Joni Mitchell, Diana Krall, Michael Brecker and Jaco Pastorius, composers such as John Williams, Vince Mendoza and Mark-Anthony Turnage ... I'm one lucky drummer. The book is "thanks," but the book is also frank in its telling of the trials, tribulations, triumphs and tragedies associated with many of contemporary music's artists over the last four decades. Three years in the writing and a lifetime in the making, "No Beethoven" is my story and the story of my colleagues and heroes. Thanks.

Mr. Erskine obviously can write. As a writer he has the same sense of rhythm he has as a drummer. Problem is, referring to the caption under the title, this is an "autobiography" -- all right, but it certainly ain't a "chronicle of Weather Report." So what do we get here? In his not-strictly chronological account (and that is a good thing) we get a lot about his formative years and his early gigs with the Kenton and Ferguson big bands; an endless chapter (well, it's only about twenty pages, but it did seem endless to me) about Mr. Erskine's endorsement and/or association with drum brands and drum manufactures, which possibly might be of some interest if you're a drummer (and even so, I'm not sure). And there's a lot about life-after-WR and the multitude of musicians and bands he played with, about his solo records, his personal life, his teaching at the University. So is there anything here about WR? Yes, interspersed across the book there are the inevitable tales from the various tours, quite a few anecdotes about Joe Zawinul (each and every one of them just reiterating the cliché of the genius disguised as a megalomaniac macho), some moving portraits of Jaco Pastorius. Wayne Shorter is mentioned about three times in the whole book. There's a two-page chapter devoted to Mr. Shorter (yes, two pages) -- which ends up talking about Zawinul anyway. Wayne Shorter is indeed Mr. Gone in this book. There's hardly anything at all about the musical process, about how WR operated as a band, in the studio and on stage. In this respect we get more information from Mr. Erskine's 16-page booklet accompanying the recent (and recommended) 4-CD box "The Legendary Tapes" (same cover picture by the way).

Peter Erskine's new book, *No Beethoven*, proves something I've always suspected--Mr. Erskine's strength and beauty as a musician stem from his generous character. *No Beethoven* is funny, extremely moving at times, irreverent, educational, and, above all, human. Can I ask for more in a book about music? I don't think so. Known worldwide as a power drummer with a mile-wide artistic streak, Erskine's book reminds us of the dedication and discipline necessary for a career in the music industry. Erskine has built a reputation as a "player," but it turns out that he spends more time listening than playing--listening to both the music around him and the silence between the notes. He isn't guided by what he plays, rather by what he hears. His musings on the art of listening, really listening, had a huge impact on me. Yes, I'm a musician as well. It's easy to fall into a me, me, me pattern with memoir writing, but Peter stays away from that trap, choosing instead to focus on the colorful personalities surrounding him throughout his astonishing career. Dare I say it? There's a real "rhythm" to the book's structure. Erskine weaves his personal history into his chronicle of his Weather Report years, a clever nonlinear device that moves the "plot" of his life along at a good steady pace. Cool. Musicians all have "stories" from the trenches, but it's not so easy to transfer them to the written page. It's also tricky to portray people honestly while remaining loyal to friendships and important professional relationships. But Erskine accomplishes these things with grace, humor, and Erskinesque style. His writing often mirrors his playing--powerful and sensitive all at once. And always, always honest.

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