



# BRANCHE TON SONOTONE!

LE WEBZINE QUI TE DÉBOUCHE LES OREILLES

## **Interview of Fred Wesley: Funk me I'm famous!**

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**Dr. Javnaire:** First, in your book « Hit me, Fred » (2002), you describe yourself as a sideman. But do you think you really are just a sideman, or... How do you consider yourself?

**Fred Wesley:** I was a sideman. But I'm a leader now. I'm getting used to be a leader. But I was a sideman when I wrote that book about me playing with Ike&Tina Turner, James Brown, Count Basie: that was sideman! But now I'm a leader, and I'm enjoying it very much.

**Dr. Javnaire:** Is there a special moment you could remember as the first you decided to become an artist?

**Fred Wesley:** In 1980, I really decided that I would gonna be an artist and I did an album called *House Party*. I wrote the songs, and sang on some of them.

**Dr. Javnaire:** Why did you choose one day to learn trombone?

**Fred Wesley:** Trombone is not something I chose. I was playing trumpet and baritone on a school band, when my father came home with a trombone one day and he taught me how to play it and he would let me play in his band. I was twelve years old, and I really wanted to be in this band. So I learned how to play it, and I became the third trombone in the band.

**Dr. Javnaire:** We could quite consider that you play trombone as a saxophonist. Why? How did you find that?

**Fred Wesley:** Well, like I said, I played trombone and... that stuck to me. That was the only instrument that I had! I never learned saxophone and I never learned to play trumpet real good. So, I just played what I had. And trombone was the instrument that I had.

**Dr. Javnaire: What is the most important for you: funk or jazz music? Are you a jazz artist, or a funk artist?**

**Fred Wesley:** I don't know... I'm a jazz artist that plays funk. I'm a funk artist that plays jazz. I think I play funk better than I play jazz... No, I think that I play jazz better: I don't know! (*laughs*) You tell me!

**Dr. Javnaire: I might prefer you when you play funk, but...**

**Fred Wesley:** Yeah... You probably. Young people do. But jazz is very abut to me: I love jazz. And I play it for years; that's even what I studied. But I got in the funk and actually I made more money with it.

**Dr. Javnaire: And there is this story about you choosing James Brown instead of a milkman job. Is it a legend or is it true?**

**Fred Wesley:** It's true. I would have been the first black milkman of Mobile, Alabama! (*laughs*) I got to do anything to keep for being a milkman.

**Dr. Javnaire: Are you now preparing a new album?**

**Fred Wesley:** Yes, I'm always preparing a new album. I did an album just recently (*With a little help from my friends*), and I'm working on a new now. But I haven't decided which one I'll do: I'm working on about seven new albums. Maybe a cover album with some pieces from Ike&Tina and "Ain't nobody". Maybe I'll do that next... but I don't know yet. I have a lot of things on the table, and I'll decide later which one I'll do first.

**Dr. Javnaire: What do you prefer: the scene or the studio?**

**Fred Wesley:** Mmmh... Another hard one! I prefer the stage I think. The stage gives you opportunity to interact with the public. You get energy from the audience. And I love audiences. But the studio gives you a chance to be creative, you know... But I believe I prefer the stage.

**Dr. Javnaire: I also saw you share your music, and teach it. So... how does it work?**

**Fred Wesley:** I want to do more of that! It's pretty good. You find kids that are really interested in the music, and they want to know. They want to know how do you do it. And what do you do, and how to get good. So I try to share it with them, you know. I don't care about the ones that aren't interested. But the ones that are interested, I really want to help them as much as possible.

**Dr. Javnaire: I love Abraham Inc. I love this idea you could mix klezmer music, funk and hip-hop. How did you decide to create such an original thing?**

**Fred Wesley:** It was an opportunity that presented itself to me. David Krakauer and So-  
Called came to me with this idea and they said it probably would work. And I worked on  
it... and it did work! It wasn't my idea but David Krakauer's. But, when I got it, it worked  
real good. We had a lot of fun together.