



Shining Star: Braving the Elements of Earth, Wind & Fire

Philip Bailey , Keith Zimmerman , Kent Zimmerman

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A revealing and heartfelt memoir from the lead singer of the legendary Earth, Wind & Fire

With more than ninety million records sold and eight Grammy awards throughout its forty-year history, Earth, Wind & Fire has staked its claim as one of the most successful, influential, and beloved acts in music history. Now, for the first time, its dynamic lead singer Philip Bailey chronicles the group's meteoric rise to stardom and his own professional and spiritual journey.

Never before had a musical act crossed multiple styles and genres with a quixotic blend of astrology, Universalism, and Egyptology as Earth, Wind & Fire (EWF) did when it exploded into the public's conscience during the 1970s. The group's shows became sensory experiences with their dramatic staging, shimmering costumes, elaborate choreography, baffling magic tricks and a thumping backbeat. At the center of it the group was its charismatic founder Maurice White and Bailey, with his soaring multi-octave range and distinctive falsetto. After being signed by recording titan Clive Davis, EWF went on to produce a remarkable series of platinum and gold albums and headline stadiums around the world. As Philip and Maurice were profoundly influenced by genius producer Charles Stepney, as well as famed arranger David Foster, EWF elevated Sly Stone's multiethnic "I Wanna Take You Higher" message to an even higher level.

Bailey hit the wall due to fame, fortune, and the excesses of global success. The constant touring and performing took its toll on him publicly and privately. While White and Bailey's relentless work ethic shot the band into the stratosphere, it also exhausted and emotionally gutted the group. In 1983, White abruptly dismantled the band, leaving Bailey and the rest of the members to fend for themselves. As a solo act, Bailey recorded "Easy Lover," a worldwide smash duet with Phil Collins, launching the next stage of his career until EWF reunited later that decade.

Shining Star is the true story of what happens when real life exceeds your dreams, when the power and pain of building a legacy brings both joy and faith-testing challenges.

Shining Star: Braving the Elements of Earth, Wind & Fire Details

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From Reader Review Shining Star: Braving the Elements of Earth, Wind & Fire for online ebook

P.e. lolo says

This is a look into the behind the scenes of one of the most popular bands from the 70s and into the 80s. I have to say that my wife and I still listen to their music to this very day and I think the album Gratitude is not only their best, but one of the live records ever recorded. Also being able to say that we saw them in concert at the forum in 1977 with my high school sweetheart and wife of 36 years is something. They put on the BEST concert, for they put on a show. This book takes you behind the scenes of the total show from costumes, the set they used, Philip Bailey, gave credit to all of the behind the scene people saying, "They could not have done everything if it was not for the road crew". I thought it was great how he gave a lot of people credit for how big Earth, Wind & Fire had gotten. He takes you to his childhood in Colorado and how he got into music and then his way to California and eventually meeting Maurice White and his brother and the formation of the band. He goes through some of the changes of musicians and their reasons for leaving. He even goes into the engineers of the records getting the sound right once they all knew what they were going for. He gives a chapter to a man named Charles Stepney, and says if had not joined as producer, writer, musician, and engineer, there might not have been Earth, Wind, & Fire. He had worked with Muddy Waters, Howlin Wolf, and Ramsey Lewis, to just name a few. Their next album they had their first of many hits but Shining Star, crossed over #1 on both top 40 and R&B they had arrived. He goes on to how he would write songs and he also goes into his shortcomings as a husband. He makes no excuses just admits he was wrong for what he did. he also goes into the reasons why they broke up which was very surprising to me that Maurice White did all that he did, but they say the music business is rough. He goes into his difficulties as a solo artist and his struggles to find the right song to finally make it back onto the charts. Then he ends with how he is back with EW&F, now that Maurice White ill and he was asked to take over. Overall for me this was a good book and I don't sweat the writing that much, for me it is the story. Plus like I said I still enjoy the music that they created. A good read overall.

Lindsay Robinson says

Good inside info on the making of EWF, Philips career and which EWF member to clear the rode from when behind the wheel.

Aaron says

Bailey's bio is full of information about the genesis of Earth Wind & Fire, with the most rewarding material focusing on the band and Bailey's unusual entry into funk and soul music in Colorado(?). Some of the biographical anecdotes about struggles with marriage and fidelity are unsurprising. Great insights about the work and imagination which made the band a superb pioneer of black music in a decade plagued by disco and empty Motown.

Claire says

I received *Shining Star: Braving the Elements of Earth, Wind & Fire* as part of a Goodreads giveaway.

Told from the perspective of Philip Bailey, *Shining Star* tells the story of Bailey's early life in Oklahoma and Colorado, the circumstances under which EWF came together, and the band's rise in the early 1970s to its final disbursement in the early 1990s and the pursuance of his solo career.

Bailey has a nice narrative voice, which made this an engaging read. One thing I was not expecting (and was not made clear on either Goodreads or by the publisher, is that Bailey is a born again Christian. To his credit, it's not a subject that comes up often or dominate the narrative in any way, but there were moments towards the end where it came off as slightly preachy. Still, an interesting read for fans of the band.

Randall Wallace says

Much more interesting than either Neil Young's or Joe Satriani's snore fests of a bio, this book teaches much about the musical group Earth, Wind and Fire; it takes you through all the albums and the personnel changes and keeps you awake. Philip explains the conceptual design of the band; most bands don't have concepts surrounding everything about the band so this is interesting. While George Benson's bio deserved more stars because he also discussed more important musical things like value of the double harmonic scales and John McLaughlin's bio teaches a lot more musical info, Philip's book was only helpful for vocal idea and work ethic info and then not that much (and Satriani deserves even fewer stars because his strictly biography book strangely taught me nothing musically). Philip teaches you that EWF, when rehearsing, could routinely go at it for ten hours and you feel very good imagining what you would sound like if you invested routinely 10 hours a day trying only to improve your skills on your own instrument on the single song list at hand (even without others). This book is inspirational that way. George Benson's bio deserved more stars for me than this lighter bio of Philip's because he risked delving deeper into the deep issues like race, inequality, war, and justice (as serious jazz cats do). Philip dealt lightly with it in this book for only three stars – he doesn't even mention his singing "Children of the Ghetto". Meanwhile, Joe Satriani in his bio deserves only two stars for exhibiting zero activist backbone.

I do orchestral sectionals and it was helpful to learn EWF also did a lot of serious sectionals – just the vocalists – just the rhythm section – just the horns. I wish there were a lot more stories on creation of their top hits (dozens in the case of EWF) like Philip's stories of the genesis of "September" with Al McKay and Maurice and his story of tracking mega hit "After the Love". I'm a huge fan of both EWF and Philip Bailey so I was very happy to read this book and learn more about them.

Selena Haskins says

This book was very boring. I couldn't finish it. I was really disappointed because EFW is one of my favorite bands of all time, even though I didn't grow up in the 70's, my mother helped me to appreciate music from that era.

If you are expecting a "tell-all" book, you won't get it here. Philip only shares the business side of things and

the formation of Earth, Wind, & Fire, and their fall. If you're a fan, you can read what Philip writes in this book on any music bio website just about it. I also felt that Philip talked more about Maurice and his brother Verdine, so much so, that it feels like he wrote the book for them.

I know the overall subject is the band itself, but this book was NOT a "Shining Star." The only reason I didn't give it 1-star is because I'm a fan.

Alban Jones says

This Was A Great Read Told From The Perspective Of A Key Member Of The Group. It Shed Serious Insight Into The Inner Workings Of The Band..., Specifically How Leader Maurice White Put The Group 2gether, Yet Remained Slightly Distant From His Younger Band Mates As He Pursued His Own Goals. Clearly The Music Will Alwayz Be Front & Center But It Was Refreshing 2 Read The Pages As Philip Bailey Pulled The Curtain Back On His Own Life, His Own Shortcomings, & How He Was Able 2 Develop Into A Lethal Vocalist In 1 Of The Baddest Bands Of All Tyme!!!

He's Candid In Places Detailing Situations, Difficult Times, & Commentary Regarding Other Musical Peers In The Music World. Specifically Bands He Viewed As Measured Against His Own. His Personal Story Is Deep, & The Tymes He Grew Up In Shaped Those Viewpoints.

Thankfully His Recollection Is On Point & He Details How Things Came 2gether 4 The Band, The Hardships They Endured, The Breakthrough 2 Success..., Reaching The Mountaintop Only 2 Topple & Fall As Times Change... Then A Resurrection/Metamorphosis As They Had 2 Re-Invent Themselves 1nce Their Leader No Longer Could Tour & Re-Package Themselves As The NEW/OLD Earth, Wind & Fire!!! All I Can Say Is..., Stay Tuned 4 Maurice's Book!!! That Should Only Enhance This Story & Open It Up 2 Head In Another Soaring Stratosphere!!!

Michael Ritchie says

I love the music of Earth Wind & Fire, and this book does tell some interesting anecdotes about the band, their records and their tours, but Bailey himself (co-lead singer) remains mostly an unknown quantity. He's not particularly insightful about his journey or introspective about himself. There are a number of unexplained gaps and errors--for example, he says he got married to his wife Janet because he had gotten her pregnant, but she didn't have their first child until over a year after the marriage. Bad editing? Maybe. A quick read, for sure, but I feel Bailey has a lot more he could have said.

Rhonda says

EWF

Great read!!! Very truthful and it was nice know ing the ups and downs of EWF. I would recommend this book to everyone.

Linda says

Was a little boring at times and repetitive but loved learning about the early days of the band life and the little unknown facts regarding their songs, costumes, and relationships.

E.D.E. Bell says

This was a great book, and one that any Earth, Wind, and Fire fan should read.

If you don't care about EWF, then I wouldn't probably read it. There wouldn't be enough to hold your interest. There are some interesting cultural stories, but mostly the book focuses on Philip Bailey's story, related to Earth, Wind, and Fire.

But if you do, this really sheds light onto Mr. Bailey's background, his entry into Earth, Wind, and Fire, and the ups and downs of the band through the 70s to today, as seen through his eyes. There are several fascinating stories, and a lot of the book focuses on Philip's often tense relationship with Reese White, the band's founder. It's not a neutral book about the band - it's a book about Philip Bailey's relationship with the band, which makes the story more personal. My favorite thing about this book was the sincerity with which it was told - there is no sense of embellishment, just the honest story of Mr. Bailey's life and career.

Marvin says

Earth, Wind & Fire has always been one of my favorite 70s groups. They had a distinct R&B sound that blended with a 60s quality of "love, peace and understanding". Incorporating all kinds of rhythms, visual effects, and high quality musicianship, EWF also managed to maintain an universal audience that went beyond ethnic groups and black and white. In some ways, they were a family friendly mix of Sly and The Family Stone and James Brown. If sometimes I felt they were a little too commercial for my taste, Maurice White and Phillip Bailey always won me over, not to mention that kick-ass horn section.

Philip Bailey is most distinctive for his great falsetto voice and he probably contributed more to EWF than he admits. One thing you discover in reading this memoir of life with EWF is that Bailey is a gentle, thoughtful and humble man. It's a refreshing tone after reading so many pop music autobiographies by egomaniacs. But he is probably right when he says that EWF was primarily Maurice White's show. Maurice White developed what was known as "The Concept" and rarely deviated from it. For Maurice, EWF was more than a music group. It was an experience, a statement, a spectacular and foremost a concept. The idea of universal harmony is never too far away in any EWF song. White's insistence on control is one of the main reason EWF worked so well and, as inevitable with most music endeavors, the main reason it fell apart.

Shining Star: Braving the Elements of Earth, Wind & Fire is written by Philip Bailey with assistance from Keith & Kent Zimmerman. It is sometimes a bit pedestrian yet sincere account of his life with emphasis on his time with EWF. I can't help but like the Philip Bailey that comes through on paper. Growing up in Denver, he seems to have avoided a lot of the pitfalls of West or East Coast urban life. He never got into drugs and, despite some forays into adultery, he never went to the party-til-you-die excesses we expect with music stars. He credits much of that to his religious background and he eventually converted to born-again

Christianity. This is also a refreshing turn since most rock star conversions stories are hit-bottom types with all the horror stories. Bailey writes about it as a part of growing up and a natural progression in his life. What Bailey lacks in backstage horror stories is well compensated by his description of living the musician's life and how EWF went from a vague concept to a fully developed phenomenon. He makes it clear that this was hard work for White, himself, and all the members of the band. It is that insight in the creation of a band that is the strength of this book and why I would recommend it.

Bailey continues his memoirs after the break-up into his own solo career culminating with the Phil Collins collaboration of "Easy Lover" and then to the reunion of EWF. In many ways *Shining Star* is a typical music biography but in other ways it is quite irresistible in its casualness. Bailey comes across as real. He tries to tell the truth the best he can but is never mean. He may criticize some aspects of Maurice White's style and decisions but he also clearly admires who "Reese" is and what he accomplished. And most important, Bailey doesn't just write about music, he writes about the cost of making his own decisions, accepting responsibility and the importance of his family. Bailey stays real which is more than I can say for most over-hyped rock autobiographies.

Three and a half stars.

Yolanda McCarthy says

Wow! The music of Earth, Wind & Fire has been a part of my life since I was a little girl. I grew up listening to my Aunts and Uncles play EWF along with New Birth and War. I have seen them in concert countless times, but having said that, I simply had no idea whatever happened to the band. They disappeared and then came back and this book tells the story. It's an amazing story. They worked hard and seriously did it for the love of music (and what great music!). Philip Bailey has to be one of the least pretentious celebrities and speaks proudly about his Denver upbringing. He talks about his spirituality but not in a preaching kind of way - more about how it got him to where he is today. If you are or have ever been a fan of this band - read this book!!!

Kimberly Hicks says

No matter where you live, or what radio station you listen to, you are, without a doubt, going to hear an Earth, Wind & Fire song. I enjoyed their music back in the 70s, and I still enjoy all of their music to this day. So, imagine my surprise as I was listening to The Tom Joyner Morning Show the other day, and Phillip Bailey was on promoting his memoir which is rightly titled.

Phillip grew up in an era where single parent households were not the norm. Having come up without his father, he had to learn some hard life's lessons, but through all the things he had to endure in his family life, music was his savior then and still remains a staple in his life now.

I enjoyed taking the journey with Phillip through his Earth, Wind & Fire memoir. Outstanding book, and one that I'm sure you'll enjoy as well. I wish Phillip all the best and look forward to more music from him in years to come.

Tina says

Boring.
