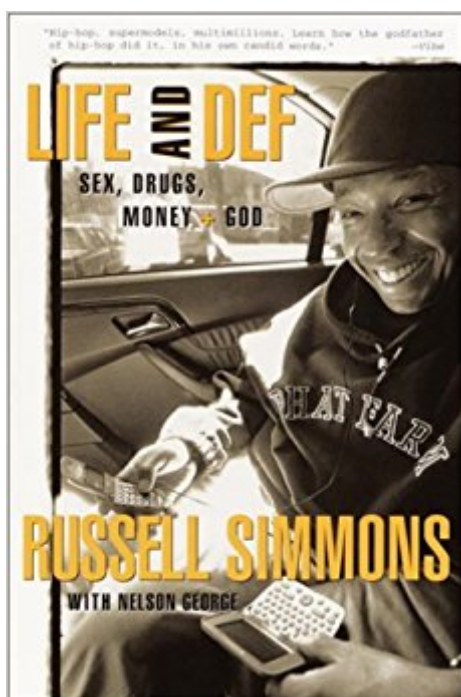


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# Life And Def: Sex, Drugs, Money, + God



## Synopsis

Russell Simmons, the original and eternal hip-hop mogul, is one of the most innovative and influential figures in modern American business and culture. When no one outside of inner-city New York had even heard of hip-hop, Simmons saw the seeds of a global force that would change the way people talk, dress, listen to music, and choose the heroes they hang on their walls. Today, he oversees a sprawling, multimillion-dollar empire of culture-defining businesses in everything from music to fashion, advertising to film, and media to visual art. At the same time he's broadened his interests and influence and pushed hip-hop to new plateaus of power and relevance. *Life and Def* is a one-of-a-kind tale that interweaves the remarkable journey of Russell Simmons with the story of the culture he's transformed and been transformed by. In his own brash, compelling voice, Simmons chronicles his numerous business successes and occasional failures. He tells the story of the founding of the legendary Def Jam Records, whose roster stretches from original rap icons like L.L. Cool J, Public Enemy, and the Beastie Boys to today's top stars, including Jay-Z and DMX. He traces the launching of Def Comedy Jam, the long-running hit television series that introduced a new generation of black comedic stars to America, from Martin Lawrence and Bill Bellamy to Bernie Mac and Chris Rock. He spins hilarious tales of his adventures in Hollywood, where he's produced hit movies like Eddie Murphy's *The Nutty Professor* and worked with quirky geniuses like Abel Ferrara. He also tells the story of Phat Farm, the wildly successful pioneering urban clothing label whose origins lay in Russell's longtime fascination with fashion (and fashion models). Simmons's story is also one of personal transformation, from the driven man who in the heady days of early success indulged himself with drugs, sex, and world-class decadence to the husband and father he is today, a man who has found meaning in activism, philanthropy, and spiritual practice while never losing his passion for the social, political, artistic, and commercial potential of hip-hop. Through it all he relates telling anecdotes about the characters he's dealt with: models and gangsters, street poets and gurus, and major players like Donald Trump, Sean Combs, Jon Peters, and Tupac Shakur. Full of advice, opinions, and behind-the-scenes scoop, *Life and Def* is the story of the quintessential hip-hop life. From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: Three Rivers Press; Reprint edition (September 24, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0609807153

ISBN-13: 978-0609807156

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 0.6 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 15.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (32 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #97,997 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #33 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Biographies > Rap & Hip-Hop](#) #47 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Business](#) #48 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Rap](#)

## Customer Reviews

I know what you are thinking. If this book is so bad, why did I give it four stars? First of all, the book only deserved 3 [stars](#) but unfortunately that is not an option due to technical difficulties (this is my first review!). Second, this is a very interesting story about a self-made millionaire who pioneered and profited from an industry that didn't exist 30 years ago. However, this book leaves a lot to be desired. Life & Def sets sail with a strong start. Simmons details his childhood and introduces his creative family. He explains the strong influence of his mother (the free-spirit painter who encouraged her children to seek non-traditional occupations), and his father (the writer who believed in a 9-5, but encouraged artistic expressions and even wrote lyrics for Run DMC!) Despite the strong start, the ship soon goes off course. Simmons bombards you with names, (random) dates, and industry specific terms. He gives brief overviews of important milestones such as his successful HBO show Def Comedy Jam, only to return (briefly again!) later in the book. My love of hip-hop and desire for entrepreneurial success pushed me through the choppy waters of this book. I especially struggled to stay afloat during the last 30 pages. By this time I was mentally exhausted from wading through oceans of acronyms, abbreviations, and run-on sentences. Simmons offers a plethora of advice. He candidly shares his mistakes and regrets in an attempt to save the reader from the same. However, he gives you a map for success omitting the last leg of the trip! At the end of the book, I was lost at sea searching for answers to the many issues that plagued the author. The best example of this is the recurring theme of drugs.

I've read this book once all throughout, and now I'm in my second reading highlighting key points Russell Simmons had made during the course of his writing. If you are an independent rap or hip-hop artist (hell, ANY independent music artist) or got plans for starting your own record label, this book is a perfect start for you. Not that it'll give you direct information regarding how to start your own label,

but it will give you an idea of what it takes to be successful out there. What it gave me, as an independent rapper myself (you can see how I choose to implement some of his points into our hip-hop blueprint by checking out my group's site, [...]) are ideas on how to effectively market my music by laying out the Def Jam's blueprint to success. Several points that Russell Simmons made that I believe is worth mentioning are ::1.) How you should properly build your audience2.) What he did to make corporate America and the mainstream to adapt to his standards, not the other way around3.) What it is about HIS brand of hip-hop that made it so successful4.) The importance of branding and having your own identity5.) How he got popular as a show promoter through networking and marketing6.) How he managed to break one of their first records, "Christmas Rappin" and used it to further their success7.) The demise of Sugar Hill Records8.) Why you can't really expect to get rich off selling records (he uses the concept of an album as your calling card to other money generators)9.) Touches on how him and Rick Rubin ran Def Jam in the earlier days...and many more valuable industry insights from the words of an established player out there.

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