

JAZZ SPEAKS ON GRAMMY AWARDS

By Ron Scott

What happiness for vocalist Samara Joy. For the world of jazz, she was the Bell of the Ball at the 65th Annual Grammy Awards, as the elated winner of two Grammys; Best Jazz Vocal Album and New Best Artist (out of 10 nominees). The latter, she actually accepted onstage during the live presentation-performance ceremony. A jazz artist hasn't won in that category since 2011, when Esperanza Spalding won over the likes of Drake and Justin Bieber. This year's Grammy Award winning song of the year was "Just Like That" by Bonnie Raitt. The song title is apropos for the following thoughts "jazz" was pondering during the evening's ceremony.

The host was the award-winning comedian, Trevor Noah. No doubt he deserved to host but what about my shine during primetime. What do I get no hosting gig ever, no on-stage gig (well, maybe once or twice), no Grammy presenting gig, and no Grammy presentation on live television, hhhmmm maybe one (Herbie Hancock comes to mind). Sure, everyone swears, "America's national treasure is jazz." Right, but when the Grammys come around, I'm treated like the girl, who only gets a date on the staircase in the projects.

Yeah, I'm America's original music. Similar to my little brother hip hop, who came out of the ghetto. Everybody laughed at him, said he was just a fad. They said he's too flamboyant, disrespectful to ladies, uses profanity and does drugs. He is gangsta, multiple arrests and even convictions. Regardless, he kept rapping and here we are years later, millions of record sales, movie and TV contracts, and all kinds of shit and Jazz still in the dam shade. Make, note I'm not hatin' or complainin' just saying.

Yeah, I know it's all about the paper. Little bro hip hop is making millions getting all the media attention. While little ole' jazz in comparison is just making short money and that doesn't warrant the Grammy stage during the prime-time ceremony. But dude, I was swinging in the first Black Broadway production *Shuffle Along* (1921) written by the two jazz musicians and songwriters Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake. Their songs from the play "I'm Just Wild About Harry" and "Love Will Find A Way" are now a part of the Great American Songbook."

In 1912 when the jazz bandleader, composer and arranger James Reese Europe formed the Clef Club Orchestra and became the first jazz orchestra to perform at Carnegie Hall it was me in the house swinging along. Bam! that was 21 years before Benny Goodman's debut at Carnegie Hall, dig.

I was there during World War I with Lt. Europe leading the 369th Infantry Regiment (the Harlem Hellfighters) in France when they gave those swinging jazz concerts for the British, French and American troops. Yo, when those cats came home and marched through Harlem stepping proud playing some mean tune that was me, daddio. Just thinking out loud, NO complainin, NO hatin' just saying!

During those horrendous terrorist days of lynchings, I witnessed the strange fruit hanging from the sycamore tree. Being in "Alabama" with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was no joke just ask John Coltrane, he wrote the tune. When Nina Simone sang "Mississippi Goddam" and "Old Jim Crow" I was all up in the mix jamming in the trenches. We were bebopping with Dizzy Gillespie swinging low in his sweet Cadillac as folks jammed to Lou Donaldson's "Alligator Boogaloo," long before you got gangsta and spit hip hop. Hell, baby we started it all coming from Africa the drum persisted, call and response resisted, the preacher was sweatin' while Negro hymns from the gospel choir praised the lawd. While down the block the devil was dancin to the blues, ragtime and jazz. Yeah, it all came through me; bebop, doo wop, R&B, soul, funk, and rap via Jocko Henderson, Hal Jackson, Jack the Rapper and Frankie Crocker "the chief rocker." Yes, I am America's treasure, sounds dam good except while my musical family enjoy all the benefits, I'm still being treated

like a booty call. What is wrong with this scenario? Hey NO complainin', NO hatin', just saying!

With Joy the only jazz musician accepting a Grammy on stage, no one would have known about the other categories of jazz winners whose presentations took place off-camera earlier in the afternoon, dig. Showing no respect for jazz greats like Wayne Shorter & Leo Genovese (Best Improvised Jazz Solo); Terri Lyne Carrington for *New Standards, Vol. 1* (Best Jazz Instrumental Album); Arturo O'Farrill & The Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra featuring The Congra Patria Son Jarocho Collective for *Fandango At The Wall In New York* (Best Latin Jazz Album. Although conductor Yannick Nezet-Sequin was awarded Best Opera Recording for "Fire Shut Up in My Bones" it also goes to others on the team which includes jazz trumpeter and composer Terence Blanchard, who scored the opera. After all he crossed the genres from jazz to blues and R&B and dam Opera.

So, every year you have the audacity to present these incredible musicians with Grammys prior to the LIVE-TV festivities, the red-carpet interviews, the paparazzi, the limos, and most of all, the cheers and applause from their many peers across all genres of music in the big auditorium. Nope, jazz artists aren't there but HEY, don't forget, jazz you are an American Treasure, America's original art form. DAM THAT! Jazz wanted to hang at the Premiere Ceremony. Jazz wanted to be sitting upfront with the likes of Lizzo, Beyonce, Jennifer Lopez, Harry Styles, Kendrick Lamar, Mary J. Blige, Bad Bunny, Steve Lacey, Adele, and Queen Latifah. Jazz wanted to be there celebrating the 50th anniversary of Hip Hop, another root of black music just like jazz but shouldn't Oscar Brown, Jr., Eddie Jefferson and Jon Hendricks, get some love as hip hop instigators? How can jazz ever be recognized and accepted by the masses if during the largest music event of the year, she can't be seen or heard?!!

After all it was Miles Davis, who explained the "*Seven Steps to Heaven*." Granted afterwards he was "*On the Corner*," drinking "*Bitches Brew*," and got involved with those "*Water Babies*" but is that any reason for the Recording Academy to

continue its disqualification of ME from appearing on that prime-time television broadcast. No, it shouldn't. "NO complainin', NO hatin', I'm just saying!" said Jazz.

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