

Throwback: Billie Holiday- Strange Fruit



Billie Holiday recorded "Strange Fruit" in 1939 and performed it at New York's first integrated nightclub, Café Society. Abel Meeropol wrote "Strange Fruit" as a poem in 1937 under the name Lewis Allan in response to a photograph taken by Lawrence Beitler of African-American boys J. Thomas Shipp and Abraham S. Smith hanging from trees on August 7, 1930, in Marion, Indiana. Holiday was signed to Columbia Records and they would not let her record "Strange Fruit" for fear of a southern backlash. Holiday's friend, Milt Gabler, the owner of Commodore Records, agreed to release it on his label so Columbia gave Holiday a one-session release. She re-recorded the song in 1944 but the 1939 recording sold one million copies and became her best-selling single. Holiday was

initially concerned about retaliation for recording “Strange Fruit” but she did it anyway because it reminded her of the life-saving medical treatment her father was denied because of racism. The poetic description of Black bodies, blood, and trees was haunting and her performance of it made audiences stand still. When she sang it at Café Society the lights were dimmed and you could only see her face. At the end of the performance, the audience looked up and she was gone before the stage lights were restored. Holiday’s unique way of phrasing and improvisation is one of the reasons why her version of “Strange Fruit” is still the most popular after decades of new covers.

“Strange Fruit” has been called the “song of the century” and “the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement.” Emmett Till’s lynching has always been credited as the real start of the movement but “Strange Fruit”’s release two years before his birth was the most egregious artistic statement about Jim Crow America.

Holiday died in 1959 after a tumultuous career as a jazz and pop vocalist innovator. Diana Ross received an Oscar nomination for her portrayal of Holiday in the 1972 film *Lady Sings The Blues*. Andra Day starred as the singer in Lee Daniels’ 2021 film *The United States vs. Billie Holiday*.

Media Questions Of The Week

Will Lee Daniels' *The United States Vs. Billie Holiday* cast Holiday as more than a tragic drug addict?Â

https://www.instagram.com/p/CLhbDqLAA-0/?utm_source=ig_embed&utm_campaign=embed_video_watch_again

Will Stevie Wonder give up his American citizenship when he moves to Ghana?Â

Billie Holiday Hologram Coming To The Apollo

[youtube id="h4ZyuULy9zs"]

A hologram of Billie Holiday will be the first of its kind to appear at the Apollo around Thanksgiving. Holiday, whose "Strange Fruit" has become synonymous with the Civil Rights Movement, performed at The Apollo over 30 times before her death in 1959. The Apollo and Hologram USA have partnered to create the illusion with permission from Holiday's estate. The hologram will sing, talk about the history of the Apollo and answer questions from the audience. Holiday was inducted into the Apollo Hall Of Fame on her centennial last April.

Philadelphia Music Walk of Fame to Induct The Roots, Billie Holiday & The Trammps To The Philadelphia Music Walk Of Fame



PHILADELPHIA (MAY 28, 2015) – The Philadelphia Music Alliance (PMA) today announced that The Roots, Ray Benson of Asleep at the Wheel, Cinderella, The Trammps, Andrea McArdle, and WOGL air personality Harvey Holiday will be added to the Philadelphia Music Walk of Fame as members of its Class of 2015. The new honorees – along with previously announced Billie Holiday – have 16 Grammy Awards and a Tony Award nomination among them. They will be formally inducted together October 26, 2015 during afternoon ceremonies along the Avenue of the Arts and celebrated that evening with a special grand gala event. The PMA will be working in conjunction with Avenue of the Arts, Inc., to make all of its fall events extra special. “This year we are able to illustrate, through our musically diverse honorees, why Philadelphia has been and continues to be the number one city for extraordinary and award winning talent,” said PMA Board Chairman Alan Rubens. “Our inductees, this year, span the musical gamut – from Jazz, Country, Disco, Hip Hop/Neo Soul, Rock, Broadway and radio.”

The Roots, named one of the greatest live bands by Rolling Stone magazine, has become one of the best known and most respected hip-hop acts in the business, winning four Grammys. The legendary Roots Crew now serves as the official house band on The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon.

Billie Holiday was considered one of the best and most influential jazz singers of all time. Her autobiography was made into the 1972 film *Lady Sings the Blues*. In 2000, Billie was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

Ray Benson has been the front man, founder and driving force behind the world-renowned *Asleep at the Wheel* for over 40 years and has overseen the release of 25 albums and has won nine GRAMMY® Awards.

Cinderella, a glam metal and hard rock band, had a series of multi-platinum albums and hit singles in the mid-~80s and sold over 15 million records worldwide. Their music videos were in regular rotation on MTV.

The Trammps, Disco™s most soulful vocal group, recorded one of the true anthems of the time and that genre of music – *Disco Inferno*. Their album of the same name went gold, and the single earned a Grammy for the multi-platinum *Saturday Night Fever* soundtrack.

Andrea McArdle is a Broadway star who rocketed to fame in 1977 as Broadway's original – *Annie*, for which she was the youngest performer ever nominated for the Tony® Award for Best Actress in a Musical. She won both the Theatre World and Outer Critics' Circle Awards for her performance.

Harvey Holiday, the legendary midday personality on 98.1 WOGL, is celebrating his 50th anniversary behind the microphone. His passion for the music he plays makes him an icon for us all to treasure.

In addition, the PMA is honoring the CAPA Foundation with the Educational Award, a financial donation, for Outstanding Excellence in Arts and Music. The CAPA Foundation is an independent non-profit organization providing sustained support to CAPA High School students by engaging CAPA alumni and parents, the Philadelphia arts community, corporate partners and foundations focused on arts education. The CAPA

Foundation was formed in response to a \$1.1 million cut in the school's operating budget as a result of the School District of Philadelphia budget crisis.

The PMA also is honoring Frank Giordano with the Platinum Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Philadelphia Music Community. The Platinum Award is given to an individual, organization or company that has been a leader and champion in supporting the music making community in a significant way. Mr. Giordano's contributions to Philadelphia's music community have been significant, including his work with The Philly Pops, and the Philly Youth Orchestra.

The announcements were made during a press reception hosted by the Stratus Rooftop Lounge atop the Hotel Monaco and Live Nation – two of this year's major sponsors.