

October 13, 2015 - Producer Reinvention In The New Music Economy

NEWSLETTER

An Entertainment Industry Organization

Big Jim Wright Does It Good: An Interview With Big Jim Wright

By Soul Jones



The President's Corner

"Happy Birthday." We know the song, we've all sung it but who owns the rights? Most members of the public didn't realize Warner/Chappell was claiming the copyright on this iconic song, although we in the music business did. Who would have thought one of the most recognizable songs in the world would not be PD? There has been much confusion as to ownership and rights since the recent ruling, but what does it all really mean? CCC past President Steve Winogradsky is here to discuss this important copyright update.

I'm so excited about our panel. Like many of us music fans, I grew up reading the liner notes to all the albums I owned. I still look for them online when I get curious about a new release or one of my favorite catalog albums. Many of the producers on this panel are listed in those liner notes we read and helped make the music and unique sound of our favorite albums and artists. We're here to find out what has changed since then in our ever evolving business. Thank you to everyone on the CCC board who helped make this panel happen, Garrett, Mary Jo, Charley, James and especially to our panelists.

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Diane Snyder-Ramirez
President, California Copyright Conference

Around the mid-nineties, at the Flyte Tyme building in Minneapolis, whenever owner Jimmy Jam - one half of mega-platinum production duo Jam & Lewis - would take a new superstar client on a tour of the studio he would make the following introduction. "And in here we have Big Jim Wright, he's one of our writer/producers here at Flyte Tyme and he just happens to sing." Jam would then nod his trademark trilby towards the young vocalist. "Say Big Jim ... just give 'em a little something." It would be at that point that he'd mosey over to the nearest keyboard. Just so happens that Big Jim Wright, speaking from a phone at his home in Los Angeles California, is sat right by a piano. "And when the cupboards bare," he sings, tinkering on the keys in the background "I'll still find something there with my love. It's understood, it's everywhere with my love, my love does it goood." The Paul McCartney classic never sounded so goood. Not even when head of state Johnny Gill covered it on his recent Still Winning album. The My Love track used by Gill originally produced by Big Jim along with Jam & Lewis - intended for his own Big Jim Wright solo album. That is until Flyte Tyme's deal with Universal Records went south. So Big Jim's debut, like so many artists that were signed during the neo-sonic-soul boom of the late nineties, vanished. For his part, Big Jim wasn't too bothered.

"I never aspired to be an artist. The only reason I used to sing on some of those Sounds Of Blackness songs is because Terry Lewis preferred my vocals within the group. That's how I ended up singing lead." The Sounds Of Blackness seminal 3rd studio album, Africa To America: The Journey Of The Drum features two largely unheralded Big Jim Wright fronted soul killers. The uptempo social commentary The Harder They Are, The Bigger They Fall and 5 minutes of soul brilliance - the unofficial Big Jim Wright solo cut (which he co-wrote, co-produced, played organ and sings lead on) - The Lord Will

Make A Way. "I'm a Hammond B3 Organ player, which is my favourite instrument. The Lord Will Make A Way started with me plucking around on the organ one day in the studio and that's how it developed. Then Terry & I wrote it with a heavy Al Green influence changing the sound to feature the Hammond B3." You can almost hear Al Green's Hi Records labelmate OV Wright in there too. "Wow, OV Wright - that's a blast from the past," says Big Jim. "I had an aunt that lived in our house that used to play all that stuff. OV Wright, Bobby Blue Bland & Johnnie Taylor. Whereas my mother and grandparents, they sang in church - very religious people."

Knowing how nasty the blues can be, certainly when compared to the salvation and saintliness of gospel, was Big Jim's aunt the black sheep of the family? "Ah, I don't know if she was the black sheep. But she was different from her siblings - that's ALL I'll say!" Wright laughs. Anyone hailing from Rockford, Illinois at that time would have been no stranger to the blues but it was gospel that dominated a young Jimmy Wright's musical education. "Like so many artists I started singing in church. My grandparents and my mother sang at the Allen Chapel AME

Church and I started singing when I was five years old. Then around ten/eleven I learned to play drums, guitar, bass, piano and finally organ. I got so popular within the community that I appeared as a special guest for a lot of different pastors - I couldn't even drive myself, because I didn't have a driver's licence, so my grandparents would chaperone me."Whenever he returns to his hometown, Big Jim is always called out of the congregation to perform. Every time I go to get my worship on, I'm expected to perform the Andrea Crouch song The Blood. They still think I'm that little kid, Jimmy, 10 years old with a high whiny voice." Wright laughs. Being a gospel-soul-wunderkind is not as glamorous as you'd imagine. "Honestly, I got bored with it - the same routine, every Sunday, sitting in front of the same instrument in the same four church walls. I just felt I had more to give and so I made a pact with Ann Nesby, who I had accompanied on keyboards ever since I was a kid, that whichever one of us made it first we would take the other along with us. Ann made it, becoming lead singer of the Sounds Of Blackness, so I followed her out to Minneapolis." 1991 was the year Big Jim packed his keyboard, after the SOB's had already hit with the Grammy award winning Evolution Of Gospel album - released on Jam & Lewis's Perspective Records (funded by A&M). "They fired their keyboard player and so Gary Hines (the director of the Sounds Of Blackness choir) remembering a time when I jammed with the band - whilst in town visiting Nesby - called and said he needed someone to tour with them urgently and offered me the job. I moved to Minneapolis the next day."

Once Big Jim got his foot in the door, he wasn't gonna let it close again. "I could never figure out why the rest of the Sounds Of Blackness would only go to the studio when they had scheduled rehearsals. 'Cause Jam & Lewis used to tell everyone on their label that 'this studio is open to you all the time.' So I would go up there every day! Whenever I could, and that's how I got to work with LoKey." LoKey's 2nd album on Perspective, the explicitly seventies-era-funky-soul inspired Back 2 Da Howse album (think Ohio Players/Isley Brothers), may not have set the Billboard charts alight, but it did provide soul music critics plenty to gush about when submitting a review. "I just hit it off with the producers and group members Tony 'Prof T' Tolbert and Lance Alexander, because we all had that interest in the great music of the 70's. They heard me play and it was a match made in heaven, so we just started jamming together. I became like the 5th member of the group." Big Jim had a hand in writing five of the album's songs, including the songs Tasty & Play With Me. Not the kind of lyrics Wright's grandmother was likely to hear him singing in church. "Well you know what - I think Tasty flew under my grandmother's radar," Big Jim laughs. "I didn't play it for her, but you know in the music industry, your family or the layman, doesn't understand the behind the scenes aspect - writing and producing. All they understand are the songs you put right in front of their face, so that definitely helped me out!"

There would have been no qualms telling Granny Wright about his work on best friend Ann Nesby's solo project I'm Here For You (including penning the title song, the excellent In The Spirit & stomping This Weekend) or his writing credit on vocal harmony group Solo's debut single Heaven. And surely it would be damn near impossible, resisting name dropping his involvement in Jam & Lewis's productions outside of their Perspective Records work, with soul's finest; Barry White (Come On), Luther Vandross (I Won't Let You Do That To Me), Gladys Knight (Next Time) & Karyn White (One Minute & Thinkin' Bout Love). It was during Jam & Lewis's 3rd dynasty - helping vintage artists return to soul glory - the mid-nineties era that Big Jim made sure he was in the right place, at the right time. "The first thing I'd have to do is wait until Ann Nesby and her manager had gone to bed, because we all shared the same car. I would then drive to the studio at 11 o'clock at night. That's when Jam & Lewis's creative juices would really be flowing. I would just go sit in the kitchen, watch TV with the remote control in one hand and a snickers bar in the other. And Jimmy Jam or Terry Lewis would be working in one of the studios and they'd walk out and say: 'Hey man, come in here and play on this!' And that's how it happened - day in/day out. I got the chance to showcase my skill on a regular basis and became woven into the Flyte Tyme fabric."

So Mom, pass me the gravy. Oh, and did I mention that I worked with Patti Labelle last week? "Patti Labelle was the most memorable session at Flyte Tyme," recalls Big Jim. Even now, after all of Wright's success, you can sense a hint of disbelief. "Both Ann and myself were prepping for Patti to come. And Patti walked in wearing a full mink coat, looking beautiful. And I was like 'oh my god! We're doing a song for Patti Labelle!' That's when we did The Right Kinda Lover (from the Gems album). Patti came to work with Jam & Lewis but Terry set the stage. 'This is Big Jim, a talented young man.' And when Patti heard me play and sing, well, we just fell in love."

Jam & Lewis left A&M, leaving behind Perspective Records and started the new label venture Flyte Tyme Records with Universal. The release schedule read: 1) Angel Grant 2) Kevin Ford & 3) Big Jim Wright. Unfortunately the subsequent albums were cancelled. But for the first project on the slate, Album by Angel Grant, Jam & Lewis entrusted co-production and co-writing on the entire set to Big Jim (including the catchy, shouldabeenasmash, Desreé-esque Knockin' & the Billboard charting lullaby Lil' Red Boat.) "Angel was and still is a beautiful woman, and Terry Lewis liked the demo she did with another guy as part of a duo based in Atlanta. But the other guy was already signed, I think, to LaFace (the label owned by production duo LA Reid & Babyface). But, still we got Angel and she came up to Minneapolis and we just fell in love with her. When we got into the studio we thought a little to the left - you know Lennon & McCartney, different influences to the R&B style." When arch super-production-enemies LA & Babyface are mentioned, in a conversation with someone from the Jam & Lewis camp, it's perfectly alright to boo. Big Jim laughs, "I think it was a friendly rivalry, fuelled more by the individual camps than the producers. You know I think our camp was more like, 'oh yeah, we'll take them out - because we have Mint Condition, LoKey, Sounds Of Blackness and of course we had Solo too.' The latter group, arguably the greatest 90's vocal harmony group there was, were swiped right from underneath Babyface's cute little babynose. Terry Lewis beating him to nail the boys' signature; spotting the group busking in the same spot at the World Trade Centre that Babyface would stroll past only days later. "Our angle was, look at our singers compared to theirs (LaFace) they had TLC, Toni Braxton - so we just felt like we had stronger singers. They definitely had more commercial success than our label. But we always felt like we had stronger talent." Have some of that LaFace. "I would say Jam & Lewis won, but then I'm a Jam & Lewis fan. I can't help it."

Big Jim's new millennium resolution would see Big Jim, transform into a, not quite so big Jim. "I wanted to get help, because after I experienced so much success, by just eating and sitting in a studio, writing with no exercise I got to a size where I just felt it wasn't healthy. So I ended up having gastric bypass surgery. The legend that is DJ Rogers was my role model; he walked me through the whole process because he had already had the surgery. He helped with portion control, exercising, and getting all the nutrients because you can only eat so much after that surgery. I'm probably 250 pounds lighter now – I'm healthy and always ready to write some hits!"

It was a lean Big Jim Wright that stepped out from under Jam & Lewis's shadow in the noughties – with the mainstream recognizing his contribution to Mariah Carey's monster comeback album *The Emancipation Of Mimi*. "Mariah had a villa over in the Virgin Islands, so she called one day and asked me to fly over and write. She was just, relaxing, collecting her thoughts. When I arrived we set up a keyboard over at the house. And that's how *Fly Like A Bird* and the rest of the music (Big Jim co-wrote 3 songs on the album) came about. It was quite the motivator that weather, that ocean – it was just beautiful."

"Big Jim Wright was Flyte Tyme's best kept secret," says former A&R executive Desmarie Guyton. "In the studio Chaka Khan shared with Big Jim an entry from her journal about a troubled person, and out came *Angel*, the second single." *Angel*, the second single lifted from the Grammy winning *Funk This* album, is a modern soul killer, allowing Chaka the space to let rip with the full range of her voice.

As the noughties moves into the teens, it's the next Chaka, Patti or Luther that Big Jim is searching for. "I'm really on a mission to promote and produce real artistry," states Wright. "With the onslaught of pro tools and computer generated music, the art has been compromised. Where is that new Aretha Franklin? Where is the new Donnie Hathaway? Stevie Wonder? We just lost Whitney Houston – who's going to fill that void?" As the band leader on hit BET show *Sunday Best* (think *American Gospel Idol*) Big Jim is ideally placed to sniff out the talent early. They might even be right under his nose. "I have a keyboard player who I call the boy wonder, "I Am" Daniel Moore. Hopefully I can hold onto him – because he's in such demand these days. Everybody's been trying to get at him from the Jacksons to NeYo and he's been touring the world playing so I'm like 'hey buddy remember me?!'"

Wright and Moore have collaborated on an entire album, titled *Scared* (scheduled for release in the summer). When asked who would play in Big Jim's dream band, Moore gets a spot but so too the rest of his *Sunday Best*, *Penthouse Players*. "Debra Killings on bass, an incredible songwriter, background singer who also contributed to *LaFace* (Boooo!), Doc Powell aka Mr Guitar Virtuoso who worked for years with Luther Vandross and Lil' John Roberts the only drummer Janet Jackson would take on tour." But the final spot is saved for a legend. "Probably my 'dream band' vocalist would be Aretha Franklin." If you asked Jam & Lewis the same question, they'd probably have the big man's name first on their list.

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4 Things To Know About The 'Happy Birthday' Ruling

By Bill Donahue

Warner/Chappell Music Inc. spent years collecting millions from anyone who wanted to use "Happy Birthday to You," but a federal judge ruled Tuesday that the company never really owned a valid copyright on the century-old song. While it might come as a surprise to most that anybody claimed to "own" the ubiquitous birthday song, Warner/Chappell had for years been quietly doing just that, raking in an estimated \$2 million a year in licensing fees from filmmakers and others.

Warner/Chappell, the publishing unit of Warner Music Group, long claimed that it had inherited a 1935 copyright for the song from a company it purchased in 1988, but a group of filmmakers and artists who paid those licensing fees challenged that claim in court in 2013. They said they'd found new documentary evidence that cast doubt on Warner's claim and that they wanted their money back. On Tuesday, they won big. A California federal judge ruled that Warner's predecessor company — Summy Co., which purportedly acquired the rights from the song's original authors — had only acquired the rights to the song's melody, which had long since passed into the public domain.

As for the lyrics? There was no proof that Summy had ever actually acquired them, meaning Warner never owned them either. "Because Summy Co. never acquired the rights to the 'Happy Birthday' lyrics, defendants, as Summy Co.'s purported successors-in-interest, do not own a valid copyright in the 'Happy Birthday' lyrics," U.S. District Judge George H. King wrote in a detailed, 43 page opinion. Beyond the fact that it's a big win for anybody who wants to use the song without forking over \$1,500 to Warner, there's plenty more to know about Tuesday's ruling. Here are four key points to keep in mind.

'Happy Birthday' Isn't Quite In The Public Domain

Many initial media reports on Tuesday said Judge King ruled that "Happy Birthday" was in the public domain, but that's not exactly what he said. While the judge found that there was no proof that the copyright to the song had ever been transferred from its original authors, Patty and Mildred Hill, to Summy and Summy's successor Warner, he definitely didn't say that nobody owns it at all. "The court didn't find that the

lyrics are in the public domain. I think that's been misunderstood," said J. Michael Keyes, a partner with Dorsey & Whitney LLP. "The court's holding said Warner doesn't own the rights to the lyrics, but there could be some other party out there that says they're the rightful owner." That doesn't mean it would be easy. Judge King's opinion casts doubt on whether Patty and Mildred Hill even wrote the lyrics, and seems skeptical about whether they maintained any rights despite years of failing to enforce them. The case also highlighted, in excruciating detail, just how hard it is to find documentary proof a century after the fact.

But as long as some heir or corporate successor could be out there who could claim ownership of the song, using the song will continue to pose a liability risk. "It's a little bit of a wonky copyright law point but it's actually a very important distinction under the law," said Naomi Jane Gray, a partner with Harvey Siskind LLP, referring to the public domain issue. "It is at least theoretically possible that somebody could come out of the woodwork and produce documents to show that they own it."

'Happy Birthday' Is the Latest Orphan Work

Rather than being in the public domain, Judge King's ruling means that "Happy Birthday to You" is now what's known as an "orphan work" — a copyrighted work that's so old that nobody knows who to pay in order to use it legally. As mentioned, nobody is sure who, if anyone, owns "Happy Birthday" if Warner doesn't. Did the Hills have heirs who could claim ownership? Did they have business partners who could have passed rights along? "The ruling highlights a current issue that many in the copyright field complain about," Gray said. "Copyright now lasts so long that it can be very difficult to find the author in order to even try to ask them for permission to legitimately use their work."

The 1909 Copyright Act granted protection for a 28-year term that could be renewed once. The 1976 Copyright Act granted protection for the life of the author plus 50 years, or for 75 years for a work of corporate authorship. The controversial 1998 Copyright Term Extension Act upped that to 70 years after the life of the author, and gave corporate works protection ranging from 95 to 120 years. When works have no clear owner — and centurylong terms make that far more likely — they become a risk to incorporate into new works, potentially locking up books, music and art in a kind of intellectual property limbo. "Orphan works are a huge problem for a lot of people," Gray said. "One thing we help our clients do is help manage risk, and it's much harder to do that if you have no idea who might own a work."

Chain of Title Really Matters

Tuesday's ruling turned on an excruciatingly exhaustive look at contracts and transactions from past decades, serving as a reminder of how important it is to take seriously the unpleasant task of chain of title due diligence when handling copyright works. Establishing "chain of title" requires a clean paper trail from the present owner all the way back to the original author, but if this week's ruling made anything clear, it's that documentary evidence from decades in the past can be tough to find.

There's no need to tell that to attorneys in the entertainment industry who do it all the time. "This kind of clearance work, checking over chain of title, it's a tedious job," said Michael C. Donaldson, founder of Los Angeles entertainment boutique Donaldson & Callif. "It's like a jigsaw puzzle, and it must be done carefully so that all of the pieces fit together." Judge King's detailed ruling, which cast a light on the various shortcomings in the chain of title for Warner's "Happy Birthday" ownership claim, is a "cautionary tale" for attorneys embarking on that kind of clearance work, Donaldson said "You have this company many years ago who bootstrapped their way into a claim of copyright and then sold it to Warner, and whoever was in charge of looking over those files and making sure that they had a good chain of title to what they were buying was not careful," he said.

Up Next: The Ninth Circuit and Beyond

Warner has only said thus far that it is "looking at the court's lengthy opinion and considering our options," but the case is almost certainly headed for a Ninth Circuit appeal. The publisher will likely file a motion for reconsideration, then ask for an immediate trip to the appeals court before the district court handles other issues.

What other issues? Remember, the case against Warner was filed as a class action on behalf of everyone who paid the publisher for the right to use "Happy Birthday" from 2009 onward. The case was bifurcated, with the court first tackling whether Warner owned the copyright. That portion that wrapped with Tuesday's resounding "no". Barring a reversal on appeal, the plaintiffs will then seek class certification and damages based on the money improperly paid to Warner. The plaintiffs have not specified how much they're seeking but have said in the past that they want "millions".

The plaintiffs are represented by Francis M. Gregorek, Betsy C. Manifold, Rachele R. Rickert, Marisa C. Livesay, Janine Pollack, Beth A. Landes and Mark Rifkin of Wolf Haldenstein Adler Freeman & Herz LLP, Randall S. Newman of Randall S. Newman PC, Alison C. Gibbs, Omel A. Nieves and Kathlynn E. Smith of Hunt Ortmann Palffy Nieves Darling & Mah Inc., William R. Hill, Andrew S. MacKay and Daniel J. Schacht of Donahue Fitzgerald LLP and Lionel Z. Glancy and Marc L. Godino of Glancy Prongay & Murray LLP. Warner/Chappell is represented by Glenn D. Pomerantz, Kelly M. Klaus, Melinda E. LeMoine and Adam I. Kaplan of Munger Tolles & Olson LLP. The case is Good Morning to You Productions Corp. et al v. Warner Chappell Music Inc. et al., case number 2:13-cv-04460, in the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California.

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PANELIST BIOS

PETER ASHER

1964, one half of Peter & Gordon, who amassed nine Top 20 records. 1968, head of A&R for the Beatles' record company, Apple Records, where he found, signed and produced James Taylor. 1971, founded Peter Asher Management, representing James Taylor, Linda Ronstadt, Joni Mitchell, Carole King, Randy Newman and more. As a producer, Mr. Asher has worked with such diverse artists as James Taylor, 10,000 Maniacs, Diana Ross, Neil Diamond, Ringo Starr, Linda Ronstadt, Hans Zimmer, Elton John and Cher, among many others. He has produced thirteen Grammy Award-winning recordings, and in 1977 and 1989 won the Grammy for "Producer of the Year".

Later, vice president of Sony Music for 8 years and is currently very active as an independent producer and music consultant. He produced, co-wrote (with Dave Stewart) and sang the love theme from *Madagascar 3*, "Love Always Comes As a Surprise," and produced new tracks with Ed Sheeran, Miguel, the Band Perry, Fall Out Boy, Hunter Hayes and others for "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road," the tribute to that classic Elton John album released on the occasion of its 40th anniversary

Current projects include the production of the follow-up album to the highly successful (and Grammy-winning) "Love Has Come for You" (Steve Martin & Edie Brickell) which has also generated a PBS special and a stage musical, "Bright Star", of which Peter is the music supervisor. "Bright Star", directed by Walter Bobbie, will be opening at the Kennedy Center in Washington in December 2015 and on Broadway in the Spring of 2016

Peter also directed the highly acclaimed Hans Zimmer live concerts ("Hans Zimmer Revealed") which took place in London on October 10th and 11th 2014 and has produced the songs for the forthcoming Barry Levinson movie, "Rock the Kasbah" (Bill Murray, Bruce Willis and Zoe Deschanel.)

In the New Year's Honours list for 2015, Peter Asher was awarded a CBE ("Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire") by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. The official investiture took place at Buckingham Palace on February the 24th.

GARRETT M. JOHNSON, ESQ.

Garrett Johnson is a member of the Bars of New York and the District of Columbia specializing in entertainment and tax law. Currently representing a wide spectrum of creative talent and industry entities including musicians, authors, recording artists, composers, playwrights, producers, independent labels and artist management companies, Mr. Johnson is also active in the provision of music publishing administration services and the facilitation of PRO affiliations, as well as general business formation. Active with the Entertainment Law Forum of the American Bar Association, AIMP and the Society of Composers and Lyricists, Mr. Johnson speaks regularly on legal and business issues in the entertainment industry in a variety of venues. Prior to entering private practice he was an attorney in the Office of the General Counsel at the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C., providing counsel to agency staff in legislative, personnel and intellectual property matters. He received his A.B. in economics from Columbia University and J.D. from the Georgetown University Law Center.

HARVEY MASON, JR.

Harvey Mason, Jr. has penned and produced songs for superstars and industry legends. Everyone from Beyonce to Aretha Franklin, Justin Timberlake to Elton John, Chris Brown to Luther Vandross, and Britney Spears to Whitney Houston have called on Harvey to deliver uniquely musical yet radio friendly hit records. "I think one of the reasons artist and execs like what I do is because I try and make every song specifically for that artist," says Harvey. He has used that philosophy in his work with many of the American Idols, including Jordin Sparks and her single "No Air", a duet featuring Chris Brown, which topped the Billboard charts in 2008.

Major motion picture studios such as Dreamworks and Paramount Pictures have called upon Harvey's talent to produce soundtracks for films like Bobby, Shrek 3, and Kung Fu Panda. Most notably, Harvey produced the soundtrack to the Academy Award winning film Dreamgirls, which won the Critic's Choice Award in 2008 for best soundtrack.

In addition to music, Harvey has ventured into movie production. His first feature length film, More Than A Game, is a documentary about the incredible journey of a high school basketball team whose most notable player happened to be Lebron James. The film won first runner up at the 2008 Toronto Film Festival and will be released theatrically by Lionsgate Films in the fall of 2009.

As an elected member of the Los Angeles Chapter of the Recording Academy (NARAS), Harvey has guest lectured at Grammy Camp and participated in Grammy in the Schools, and the Music Cares Foundation. Artists Harvey has worked with have been nominated for countless Grammy awards for work he has written and produced. In addition, he has been nominated for three Grammy Awards for his work with Justin Timberlake, Toni Braxton and the soundtrack for Dreamgirls.

Mason Sound in North Hollywood is home to Harvey Mason Media. Mason Sound features five state-of-the-art recording rooms and houses administrative offices overseeing his production company, publishing venture and record label.

THOM RUSSO

Early in his career, Thom Russo experienced sessions with some of the giants in pop and R&B...Michael Jackson, Janet Jackson, Diana Ross, Cher, Babyface and Prince. He quickly started a progression into what would be a career stamped with deep diversity, musically and culturally. While beginning to frequently remix, In 1997 he worked on his first Grammy-winning track, Eric Clapton's "Change the World," which won for both Record and Song of the Year. Johnny Cash's "Man Comes Around" also snagged a Grammy nomination for Thom in later years, while his work with Latin rock superstar Juanes has secured him an astounding 12 Grammy awards to date, from Latin and Anglo Grammy's combined.

Marking the beginning of a long string of Latin rock hits, Thom has continued to work with powerhouse artists all over the latin world, including as Mana (Mexico), Alejandro Sanz (Spain), Aterciopelados (Columbia), indie critic favs KINKY (Mexico), and cutting edge newcomers like the Spanish flamenco-hardcore artist, Huecco. In 2008, he produced the violin virtuoso Lili Haydn's most recent record, a project bridging the gap between classical and rock, and bringing in yet another genre.

As of recent, he completed the sophomore release for the Mexican / anglo superstars Jesse and Joy, who took best new artist Grammy in 2007. The record, "Electricidad", peaked at #3 on the national Billboard charts and first single reached #4.

These days you can never tell where Thom might leave his mark: on a rock supergroup (Audioslave), on a soundtrack for the a hollywood blockbuster ("Spider-Man") or on a bona fide pop music / culture phenomenon (Jay-Z's "99 Problems").

JAMES "BIG JIM" WRIGHT

Television music director, award-winning record producer/composer, musician and vocalist, Big Jim Wright is a force that music-industry insiders have known, emulated and called upon for years. Ordained by legendary producers Jimmy Jam & Terry Lewis, as "Flyte Time's Secret Weapon," this piano and organ virtuoso has written, composed, scored and/or produced for the likes of Sting, Janet, Luther, Michael, Elton, Usher, Lionel, Patti, Mary J., Aretha & Mariah... no last names required. As if that weren't enough, Big Jim has made an impressive foray into television as Music Director of BET Networks' *Mo'Nique Show*, *Sunday Best* and *Apollo Live*. He has also appeared as on-camera mentor/producer for the TVOne *R&B Divas* franchise.

Big Jim joined acclaimed record producers Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis of Flyte Tyme Productions in the early 90's and honed his craft co-writing and producing a string of hits within the famed production dynasty. His arsenal of talent caught the attention of Jam and Lewis as a standout of the renowned gospel/R&B aggregate, Sounds of Blackness (first group signed to Jam & Lewis' Perspective Records), for whom he would perform, produce, arrange and compose for over half a decade. During that time he would help to shape the Grammy-winning group's trademark sound, touring almost continuously and recording such landmark albums as *Evolution of Gospel* and *Africa To America*.

Working out of Jam & Lewis' state-of-the-art Flyte Time studios in Minneapolis, Big Jim maintained a frenzied pace as writer, producer and artist. Over the next several years, he would work with a veritable Who's Who of modern musical greats. Among the highlights are providing background vocals on "Here I Am," the theme from the animated film, *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron*, featuring Bryan Adams; lead vocals on a remake of the Stevie Wonder classic "Higher Ground" for the TBS Network's nationally aired NBA broadcasts; co-writing Yolanda Adams' top 5 R&B and top 40 Pop hit, "Open My Heart," as well as the R&B smash "Chante's Got A Man," with Chante Moore and "I Wish I Wasn't" for Heather Headley, all the while remaining male lead vocalist for Sounds of Blackness and recording the soulful "The Lord Will Make A Way," the Gap Band influenced "Everything's Is Gonna Be Alright," "The Harder They Are The Bigger They Fall," and the Christmas classic "Soul Holidays."

When Jam & Lewis decided to expand the focus of Flyte Time productions to include film, making a move to Los Angeles, CA, secret weapon Big Jim was right in step with this vision, evidenced by their creative collaboration in executive producing, writing, and scoring the Beyoncé Knowles and Cuba Gooding Jr. feature film, *Fighting Temptation*; the end title song "Definition of Love" performed by Deborah Cox from the film *Akeelah and the Bee* and "Ne Me Laisse Pas Seule Ici" and "Nobody Cares" for the soundtrack of Oscar-nominated *Hotel Rwanda*.

Big Jim has garnered Grammy, ASCAP, NAACP and DOVE awards throughout his career, including the Grammy Award for Best Gospel Song for Yolanda Adams' "Be Blessed," a nomination for Album Of The Year for his work on Mariah Carey's 6x platinum album *The Emancipation of Mimi*.

SAVE THE DATE - **Next Month: Digital Panel**

Tuesday November 17th at the Sportsmen's Lodge Event Center

12833 Ventura Blvd, Studio City, CA 91604

6:15 PM Check-In • 6:30 PM Cocktails • 7:00 PM Dinner

Please check our website and your inbox for more information soon!