

The Blind Boys of Alabama

THE BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA are recognized worldwide as living legends of gospel music. Celebrated by The National Endowment for the Arts and the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences with Lifetime Achievement Awards, inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame, and winners of five Grammy® Awards, they have attained the highest levels of achievement in a career that spans over 70 years and shows no signs of diminishing.

Longevity and major awards aside, The Blind Boys have earned praise for their remarkable interpretations of everything from traditional gospel favorites to contemporary spiritual material by acclaimed songwriters such as Curtis Mayfield, Ben Harper, Eric Clapton, Prince and Tom Waits. Their performances have been experienced by millions on The Tonight Show, Late Night with David Letterman, the Grammy® Awards telecast, 60 Minutes, and on their own holiday PBS Special. The Blind Boys' live shows are roof-raising musical events that appeal to audiences of all cultures, as evidenced by an international itinerary that has taken them to virtually every continent.

The Blind Boys of Alabama met at the Alabama Institute for the Negro Blind in 1939, and left there to 'turn pro' in 1944. Their recorded output, reaching back to 1948 with their hit "I Can See Everybody's Mother But Mine" on the Veejay label, is widely recognized as being influential for many gospel, R&B and rock 'n' roll artists. The group toiled for almost 40 years almost exclusively on the black gospel circuit, playing in churches, auditoriums, and even stadiums across the country.

The Blind Boys had their own chance to "cross over" to popular music in the 1950's, along with their gospel friend and contemporary Sam Cooke, but stayed true to their calling. In the 1960's, they joined the Civil Rights movement, performing at benefits for Dr. Martin Luther King. They toiled in the vineyards all through the 1970's as the world of popular music began to pass them by. But in 1983, their career reached a turning point with their crucial role in the smash hit and Obie Award-winning play "The Gospel at Colonus," which brought the Blind Boys timeless sound to an enthusiastic new audience. In the 1990's they received two Grammy nominations and performed at the White House.

In recent years the Blind Boys' musical brethren have paid homage to their legacy and their continued relevance by asking them to contribute and collaborate on new projects. The Blind Boys have appeared on recordings with Bonnie Raitt, Ben Harper, k.d. lang, Lou Reed, Peter Gabriel, Susan Tedeschi, Solomon Burke, and many others. The Blind Boys of Alabama have profoundly influenced an entire generation (or two) of gospel, soul, R&B and rock musicians and are still blazing trails after all these years.

With as much momentum as the Blind Boys have gathered in the last several years, there is no chance of slowing them down. As long as they are called to, they will continue to create uplifting music for their fans and inspire new generations of musicians.

