

A New Sound Of Freedom

1963 March On Washington Set The Standard For Songs Of Protest

BY RANDY LEWIS

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The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom 50 years ago was not only a galvanizing moment for African-Americans and civil rights. It was also a watershed moment in popular music.

Before that hot summer day, pop music was mostly about a catchy tune and a memorable lyric. Since then, it became commonplace for songs with a social message to race up the sales charts. The Beatles and James Brown did it in the '60s, and urban rappers, country singers and alternative-rock bands continue speaking out today.

That was something new on Aug. 28, 1963. Actor and singer Harry Belafonte lined up black musicians Mahalia Jackson, Odetta and Marian Anderson for the concert on the National Mall at the end of the march, but he also included white folk artists Bob Dylan, Joan Baez and Peter, Paul and Mary.

Malcolm X and some others had argued against including white performers. Belafonte ignored them, saying it was not in keeping with the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s message of inclusion.

"Nothing that made up the American mosaic was not represented," said Belafonte, now 86. "Looking out at that sea of humanity ... we were looking at what Dr. King was describing as the dream."

Gospel music had long played a part in the civil rights movement, with "We Shall Overcome" serving as the unofficial anthem of the movement. And folk music, at that time, was at the peak of its popularity.

Between Elvis Presley's induction into the Army in 1958 and the arrival of the Beatles and the British Invasion in 1964, folk music exerted a powerful hold on radio and television through appearances and recordings by the Kingston Trio; Peter, Paul and Mary; Baez; the New Christy Minstrels; Trini Lopez and others.

What came into prominence at the time of the march were songs of protest and social consciousness. "There was a profound shift



Singers Peter Yarrow and Paul Stookey sing alongside with Trayvon Martin's parents, Tracy Martin and Sybrina Fulton, during the "Let Freedom Ring" ceremony to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom at the Lincoln Memorial on the National Mall Wednesday. Yarrow and Stookey — as part of the folk trio Peter, Paul and Mary — performed at the 1963 March on Washington. Mary Travers died in 2009.

OLIVIER DOULIERY/ABACA PRESS/MCT

going on in the country," said Peter Yarrow, 75, of Peter, Paul and Mary. "The people who were running record companies were deeply committed to the idea that music was part of an awakening that was happening in America. They were committed to telling the story ... to people in ways that inspired them not only to think differently but to act differently."

Perhaps no performer embodied this shift more than a young folk singer from Minnesota: Bob Dylan. He was invited to sing at the march despite not being widely known outside folk circles at the time.

"He brought the content," Belafonte said. "His artistic command was necessary on that platform."

Belafonte said the importance of music in galvanizing support for the movement cannot be overestimated.

"Artists are the gatekeepers of truth," he said. "In every instance where I have been exposed to struggle, songs were an intricate part of the day." Though a huge star at the time, Belafonte declined to take the spotlight for himself, singing only in the group efforts with other singers.

Music at the March on Washington was anything but mere entertainment for the hundreds of thousands of onlookers.

"Music was the lifeblood of the civil rights movement," said Robert Santelli, executive director of the Grammy Museum. "Without the music, which gave the movement its courage and its soul, I don't know whether the civil rights movement could have succeeded."

"When you are facing a line of armed police, fire hoses and German shepherds baring their teeth, you have to muster courage, and of-

tentimes it was through music that they did that."

Santelli noted that music has long been used to express protest.

"When you look at music and its role in American history," Santelli said, "you can go all the way back to pre-Revolutionary War days, and you find that radicals in Philadelphia, Boston and New York were selling broadsides, which put new lyrics to English beer-drinking songs. This was a way to get the word out, to get your political slant promoted."

But there are times, he said, "when it becomes more important, times when it becomes more prominent."

That was certainly the case with the March on Washington, where music also played a role behind the scenes.

Today the march is largely re-

membered as the day King gave his celebrated "I Have a Dream" speech from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Historians have long known that that portion of the talk was not included in the speech as written, but that King added the "Dream" section, which he'd voiced in previous talks, at the spur of the moment.

What's less well-known is what prompted King to depart from his text at that moment. Belafonte, who was on the platform that day, recalls King taking a pause during which gospel singer Mahalia Jackson shouted, "Tell them about the dream, doctor!" at which point he extemporized one of the most celebrated speeches in American history.

As civil rights activist Roger Wilkins later put it: "If Mahalia Jackson, with that voice, told you to do something, you did it."

Summer Cinema Season Ends, So It's Time For 'S'mOscars'

BY ROGER MOORE

McClatchy-Tribune News Service

The kids are back in school, the popcorn poppers are cooling off and the theaters they operate in are back on fall hours. So that's a wrap on this year's summer cinema season, that First of May-to-Labor Day epoch when movie budgets are big and movie theater soft drinks are bigger.

The domestic box office was up, to over \$4.6 billion, a new record, according to Box Office Mojo. The

international audience, which Hollywood has been pandering to of late ("Pacific Rim"), is flat.

"Iron Man 3" made the most money (\$408 million), "Despicable Me 2" made over \$350 million and "Man of Steel," not a sequel, took in \$290.

The Academy Awards are handed out in the dead of winter, and typically honor only those films that are still fresh on everybody's mind — prestige pictures, the fall and winter "Awards Season" movies. Summer movies deserve their own Oscars — S'mOscars, we

call them. Sort of like S'mores, without the marshmallow.

And here they are.

BEST PICTURE — "Fruitvale Station," one of just a handful of summer dramas, this one could make the real Oscars best picture short list.

BEST ACTRESS — Cate Blanchett, so broad, so theatrical, so frail and Blanche DuBois-like in Woody Allen's "Blue Jasmine." Another "real" Oscar favorite.

BEST ACTOR — Forrest Whitaker reminded us that the

greatest weapon of the civil rights movement might have been dignity in "The Butler."

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR — Steve Carell, playing bad in "The Way, Way Back"

BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS — Shailene Woodley, who turns the high school-drinking dramedy "The Spectacular Now" serious the moment she shows up.

BEST MOVIE YOU MISSED — See above. "Spectacular" about covers it.

WORST MOVIE YOU ALL SAW

— "Man of Steel." Yeah, I went there.

BEST MAKE-WORK PROJECT FOR HIS PALS — Joss Whedon's "Much Ado About Nothing."

WORST MAKE-WORK PROJECT FOR HIS PALS — Adam Sandler's "Grown Ups 2."

MOST RIOTOUS PERFORMANCE IN A BAD MOVIE — Jeff Bridges in "R.I.P.D.," edging Johnny Depp in "Tonto: The Motion Picture."

SUMMER | PAGE 14B

Berry

From Page 1B

said. "I believe God used all that to bring me and my wife back together. Our relationship is stronger than ever."

As his relationship with God has grown, Berry has incorporated his faith more into his music. Last year, he released a Christian album, "Real Man, Real Life, Real God."

"It just talks about being who we are and who God made us to be," he said.

For his Sept. 7 performance, Berry said he'll play a mixture of older and newer songs, including fan favorites such as "Standing on the Edge of Goodbye," "You and Only You," and "She's Taken a Shine."

"I'll also have some songs that have influenced me as a singer and some songs off 'Real Man,'" he said.

Berry added that he is excited to play at the WJ Ranch, especially considering what he has heard about the venue, which is known for its acoustics.

"These concerts are indoors and a very intimate and unique setting," Schiferl said. "One of the best compliments we've had was a letter last year from a couple in Sioux City who says that they have been to many of our concerts and choose to come here over concerts in Sioux City because of the personal venue and good sound."

For ticket information, visit www.schiferlswjranch.com or call 402-357-2102.

"I hope folks will come out," Berry said. "I look forward to singing my songs, and if there's anything anybody wants to hear, they can just holler it out and I'll sing it for them."

You can follow Derek Bartos on Twitter at twitter.com/d_bartos

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