

## Soul Train Awards Celebrate Icons and New Talent

Contributed by Chivone Smith -- Black College Wire  
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### Celebrities honor history and future of soul music

The Centric Soul Train Awards, presented by BET, brought out many celebrities to honor the remarkable history and future of soul music. Hosted by Taraji P. Henson and Terrence Howard for the second time, this year's awards were filmed at Atlanta's own Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre on Wednesday, Nov. 10.

To kick off this highly anticipated event, celebrities and guests walked the infamous red (purple) carpet, showcasing their fashion choices for the evening during the pre-show. During the show, R&B singer El DeBarge premiered his new song "Lay With You," which was a classy and centric duo with Faith Evans.

On the purple carpet, Taraji P. Henson gave her thoughts on Atlanta being referred to as black Hollywood, she said, "This [Atlanta] seems to be the place for hip hop and we have had a couple of awards here, I can say that. I guess there's also a lot of movies they've filmed here and there are a lot of celebrities that have moved here so, yeah, I can agree with that." She also mentioned who she was looking forward to seeing that night, "There's so many people here tonight, but I got to give honors to the great ones that came before me and that's Anita Baker and Ron Isley."

When reflecting on what the Soul Train Awards means to him, soul singer Dwele said, "Soul Train is about music and as far I can think back, Soul Train was always in when it came to music. So actually, to be a part of it this year is like a blessing."

Songstress Melanie Fiona also paraded down the purple carpet and talked about her hopes as she is preparing for the release of her second album next year. "I feel very blessed right now. I really want people to recognize me vocally," Fiona said.

After celebrities gushed about upcoming projects and discussed their favorite memories from the Soul Train movement, it was show time! R. Kelly took it back as he opened up the show with tricks up his sleeves and surprises behind his back. He sounded great, and looked phenomenal during his performance.

Other performances of the night included Ne-Yo, Eric Benet, Cee-Lo Green, Jazmine Sullivan, Keyshia Cole and many others.

Along with exciting performances, some of the most well known artists were nominated in categories like Best R&B/Soul Female, Best R&B/Soul Male, Best Gospel Performance and Best Dance Performance.

Alicia Keys and Usher were both nominated in four different categories, leading the nominations of the night in categories such as Song of The Year, Album of the year and Record of the year along with Best Male and Female R&B/ Soul.

But it was hip hop artist B.o.B who took home the award for Song of the Year for his hit single, "Nothing On You," featuring Bruno Mars. This award was the first for Mars and he appeared very happy for it to be received at this particular awards show. He later performed his song "Grenade."

It must have been a night of firsts because Melanie Fiona also took home her first award for Best New Artist. Hosts Terrence Howard and Taraji P. Henson entertained the audience as they paid homage to the original "Soul Train" during their dance break. They added a more modernized touch to it however.

One of the most exciting moments of the night were the performances honoring the legendary Anita Baker. Baker has been in the music industry for over two decades with over 15 million albums sold worldwide. She is recognized for her prominent place in the music industry as a passionate Soul singer and has been awarded several Grammy's, NAACP Image, Billboard and Rolling Stone awards.

Artists like Kem, Chrisette Michele, El DeBarge and Tamia honored Ms. Baker during their own rendition of a few of her hit songs. During the purple carpet segment, Tamia expressed what it meant for her to honor Ms. Baker, "I grew up with her. She was an inspiration...Seeing that she did it, I was like wow, I can do it," she said.

Michael Baisdon introduced the legendary Anita Baker, and in a brief acceptance speech she gave her definition of what soul music is, she said "Soul music is the truth." As her two sons accompanied her on stage, she went on to tell a story of her very first performance on Soul Train. She wanted to look the part, but she didn't really look the part compared to the dancers back then, so she wore a long black lace gown. It was wrong, but it was her right, as she explained.

Furthermore, the show continued with an interesting performance from Erykah Badu and reggae artist Gyptian, who won

the first ever award for Best Reggae Artist. Wolf Blitzer, from CNN's "The Situation," made a surprise appearance as he shocked the crowd with his announcement that he wanted to learn how to Dougie! To do so, one must first learn the foundation of the Dougie and Mr. Dougie Fresh himself came out and presented a crash course for Blitzer.

Eminem won the award for Best Hip Hop Song of The Year for his song "Love The Way You Lie" featuring Rihanna against Rick Ross' "BMF," Nicki Minaj's "Your Love" and Drake's "Find Your Love." Janelle Monae accepted the Centric Award and the show concluded with the second legend award which was to Soul singer Ron Isley.

The legendary Ron Isley's career expands over five decades with 30 albums and 111 hit singles. He was the lead singer of the family group "The Isley Brothers" and is well known for his many collaborations with singer and songwriter, R. Kelly. Isley plans to return to the industry with his new album "Mr. I" set to release in the near future.

Isley was honored with performances from Freddie Jackson, Chante Moore and Tank, among others. During an interview regarding Tank's thoughts on honoring the legend, he stated, "I get to honor Ron Isley. I get to give back a little to what he's given us."

Other celebrities in attendance were Rozanda "Chilli" Thomas, Ray J., Reverend Jesse Jackson, Keisha Knight Pulliam, Raven Symone, Kim Fields and Elise Neal just to name a few.

From the stage manager to the hosts, BET was highly accommodating in the awards this year and provided a fulfilling experience for its audience. The Soul Train Awards premiered on television Sunday, Nov. 28 at 9:00 p.m. on BET and Centric.

Chivone Smith writes for the CAU Panther, the Clark Atlanta University student newspaper, which originally published this article.

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