

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

Legendary Performer Eartha Kitt Remembered



Eartha Kitt hugs Nat King Cole, playing the piano in the role of W.C. Handy, in a scene from the 1958 movie 'St. Louis Blues.'

Sultry singer was symbol of elegance

(AP) -- Eartha Kitt, a sultry singer, dancer and actress who rose from South Carolina cotton fields to become an international symbol of elegance and sensuality, died Dec. 25 from colon cancer at the age of 81.

A self-proclaimed "sex kitten" famous for her catlike purr, Kitt was one of America's most versatile performers, winning two Emmys and nabbing a third nomination. She also was nominated for several Tonys and two Grammys.

Her career spanned six decades, from her start as a dancer with the famed Katherine Dunham troupe to cabarets and acting and singing on stage, in movies and on television. She persevered through an unhappy childhood as a mixed-race daughter of the South and made headlines in the 1960s for denouncing the Vietnam War during a visit to the White House.

Through the years, Kitt remained a picture of vitality and attracted fans less than half her age even as she neared 80.

When her book "Rejuvenate," a guide to staying physically fit, was published in 2001, Kitt was featured on the cover in a long, curve-hugging black dress with a figure that some 20-year-old women would envy. Kitt also wrote three autobiographies.

Once dubbed the "most exciting woman in the world" by Orson Welles, she spent much of her life single, though brief romances with the rich and famous peppered her younger years.

After becoming a hit singing "Monotonous" in the Broadway revue "New Faces of 1952," Kitt appeared in "Mrs. Patterson" in

1954-55. (Some references say she earned a Tony nomination for "Mrs. Patterson," but only winners were publicly announced at that time.) She also made appearances in "Shinbone Alley" and "The Owl and the Pussycat."

Her first album, "RCA Victor Presents Eartha Kitt," came out in 1954, featuring such songs as "I Want to Be Evil," "C'est Si Bon" and the saucy gold digger's theme song "Santa Baby," which is revived on radio each Christmas.

The next year, the record company released follow-up album "That Bad Eartha," which featured "Let's Do It," "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" and "My Heart Belongs to Daddy."

In 1996, she was nominated for a Grammy in the category of traditional pop vocal performance for her album "Back in Business." She also had been nominated in the children's recording category for the 1969 record "Folk Tales of the Tribes of Africa."

Kitt also acted in movies, playing the lead female role opposite Nat King Cole in "St. Louis Blues" in 1958 and more recently appearing in "Boomerang" and "Harriet the Spy" in the 1990s.

On television, she was the sexy Catwoman on the popular "Batman" series in 1967-68, replacing Julie Newmar who originated the role. A guest appearance on an episode of "I Spy" brought Kitt an Emmy nomination in 1966.

In 2000, Kitt earned another Tony nod for "The Wild Party." She played the fairy godmother in Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Cinderella" in 2002.

As recently as October 2003, she was on Broadway after replacing Chita Rivera in a revival of "Nine."



Eartha Kitt

Entertainers to be missed Other African-American entertainers who died in 2008:



Bernie Mac
Actor and Comedian



Odetta
Singer and Civil Rights Activist



Bo Diddley
Musician



Isaac Hayes
Musician

Jazz Great Dead at 70

(AP)-- Freddie Hubbard, the Grammy-winning jazz musician whose style influenced a generation of trumpet players and who collaborated with such greats as Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane and Sonny Rollins, died Monday, a month after suffering a heart attack. He was 70.

A towering figure in jazz circles, Hubbard played on hundreds of recordings in a career dating to 1958, the year he arrived in New York from his hometown Indianapolis, where he had studied at the Arthur Jordan Conservatory of Music and with the Indianapolis Symphony.



Freddie Hubbard

TV Diversity Falls Short

Report urges action

The entertainment industry, particularly television, continues to fall seriously short in achieving diversity, according to a new NAACP report "Out of Focus, Out of Sync - Take 4."

Without quick action to reverse the bleak statistics, the industry could face political action, NAACP officials said.

"At a time when the country is excited about the election of the first African American president in U.S. history, it is unthinkable that minorities would be so grossly under-represented on broadcast television," said NAACP President and CEO Benjamin Todd Jealous.

"Perpetrating the situation is the

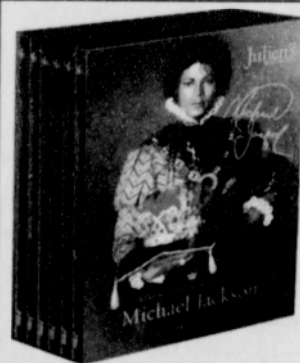


Benjamin Todd Jealous

fact that the few African Americans in higher positions in that industry lack power to green light new series' or make final creative decisions, which has translated into a critical lack of primetime programming by, for or about people of color," said NAACP Hollywood Bureau Executive Director Vicangelo Bulluck.

Specifically, the report reveals that hiring, promotion and acting opportunities for minorities are directly tied to highly subjective practices, a closed roster system and potentially discriminatory membership guild requirements.

The serious shortage of minority faces on primetime television can also be traced to the virtual disappearance of black programming since the merger of UPN and WB networks into The CW network, according to the report.



The box set of auction catalogs featuring memorabilia from the collection of entertainer Michael Jackson.

King of Pop Sells his Stuff

The gates of Michael Jackson's famed Neverland Ranch and one of the white gloves first unveiled in his 1983 "Billie Jean" video are going up for auction in a 2,000-item sale organized by the self-styled King of Pop.

Auctioneer Darren Julien said that Jackson was sorting through thousands of personal items and his vast art collection from the abandoned Neverland Ranch and other places.

He said the five-day auction in Beverly Hills, scheduled for April 21-25, will be the first organized by Jackson, who has been living as a virtual recluse since his acquittal in 2005 on child sex abuse charges.

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