



Smithsonian

*National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center*

## Guide to the Soul Train Awards Records

NMAH.AC.1223

Alison Oswald.

2012

Archives Center, National Museum of American History  
P.O. Box 37012  
Suite 1100, MRC 601  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7012  
archivescenter@si.edu  
<https://americanhistory.si.edu/archives>

# Table of Contents

Collection Overview .....	1
Administrative Information .....	1
Arrangement.....	3
Scope and Contents.....	2
Biographical / Historical.....	2
Bibliography.....	3
Names and Subjects .....	3
Container Listing .....	5
Series 1: Award Programs, 1987 - 2004.....	5
Series 2: Posters.....	7
Series 3: Ephemera, 2001, 1990.....	8

---

## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
<b>Title:</b>	Soul Train Music Awards Records
<b>Date:</b>	1987 - 2004
<b>Identifier:</b>	NMAH.AC.1223
<b>Creator:</b>	Soul Train Holdings, LLC (Donor)
<b>Extent:</b>	1 Cubic foot (1 box)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	The collection consists of printed materials, including programs, press kits, prints, slides and posters from various award presentations given by the syndicated television program Soul Train from 1987 to 2004. These include the Soul Train Music Awards, Soul Train Lady of Soul Awards, Soul Train Comedy Awards, and Soul Train Divas and Kings.

---

## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

The collection was donated by Soul Train Holdings, LLC, through Kenard Gibbs, CEO on August 12, 2011.

### Related Materials

#### **Materials Held at Other Organizations**

##### **Library of Congress Copyright Office**

Complete documentary sets of each "as broadcast" episode in DigiBeta or 1/2" VHS format and written transcriptions. "Soul Train" deposited this material at the Library of Congress Copyright Office in 2001.

### Processing Information

Processed by Alison Oswald, archivist, 2012.

### Preferred Citation

Soul Train Music Awards Records, 1987-2004, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution

### Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

### Conditions Governing Use

Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives Center makes no guarantees concerning copyright restrictions. Other intellectual property rights may apply. Archives Center cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.

## Appraisal

Archives Center staff examined over 280 cubic feet of material that consisted of business records with footage in video and digital formats, show transcripts, technical information for each episode, contracts, and slides. These materials were not acquired.

---

## Biographical / Historical

Soul Train, was the longest-running syndicated television series in American history. Don Cornelius, a former disc jockey, created "Soul Train" in 1970 for the Chicago television station WCIU and served as its writer, producer and host. When it became a local sensation, he moved the show to Los Angeles and began broadcasting nationally in 1971, beginning a thirty-five year run in syndication. Soul Train presented rhythm and blues, soul, and hip hop performers, though sometimes funk, jazz, disco, and gospel artists were featured.

Born on Chicago's South Side on September 27, 1936, Cornelius had an early craving to go into broadcasting. He graduated from DuSable High School in 1954, served in the Marine Corps and then returned to Chicago to marry Delores Harrison. They had two sons, Anthony and Raymond. In 1966, Cornelius gave up a career selling insurance and cars to take a three-month broadcast course. He landed a job as a substitute disc jockey at WVON in Chicago and later as a sports anchor on the television program "A Black's View of the News." He produced the "Soul Train" pilot with four-hundred dollars of his own money, taking the title from a road show he had created for local high schools. Cornelius stepped down as host of the "Soul Train" in 1993, but the show continued to air for another decade with guest hosts presiding. In 2001, Cornelius married Viktoria Chapman, but divorced her in 2009.

In 2008, Cornelius sold the "Soul Train" franchise and the archives to a subsidiary of Vibe Holdings LLC. Over 1,117 episodes were produced. The musical artists who performed on "Soul Train" included many of the greatest African American performers of the last decades--Aretha Franklin, Ray Charles, James Brown, the Jackson Five--and many Motown acts. Over its long history, the show primarily featured performances by rhythm and blues, soul, and hip hop artists, although funk, jazz, disco, and gospel artist also appeared. While most of these artists were African American, in later years the show featured some white performers such as Elton John and David Bowie. Singer Gino Vanelli was the first to integrate the show, in 1975, when Cornelius invited him to board the train to sing his hit, "People Gotta Move."

Cornelius also produced a number of award shows and annual specials, including the Soul Train Music Awards, the Soul Train Lady of Soul Awards, and the Soul Train Christmas Starfest. African American performers were predominantly featured in these shows and they served as a welcome counterpoint in the black musical community to what were perceived of as white-dominated award programs.

---

## Scope and Contents

The collection consists of printed materials, including programs and press kits, and photographic prints, slides and posters from various award presentations given by Soul Train. These include the "Soul Train" Music Awards, "Soul Train" Lady of Soul Awards, "Soul Train" Comedy Awards, "Soul Train" Divas and Kings.

**Series 1, Award Programs, 1987-2004**, is subdivided into five subseries: Subseries 1, Soul Train Award Programs, 1987-2004; Subseries 2, Lady of Soul Award Programs, 1995-2003; Subseries 3, Christmas StarFest, 1998-1999, 2003; Subseries 4, Comedy Awards Program, 1993.

**Subseries 1, Soul Train Award Programs, 1987-2004**, consists of printed programs and press kits for the annual awards event, held each year in Los Angeles, California. The press kits contain biographies for the award recipients, press releases, publicity prints and slides of award recipients. The prints and slides were assembled by Tribune Entertainment Company. In 1995, there was a twenty-fifth anniversary Hall of Fame Special. The history of the "Soul Train" story is chronicled in this 1995 anniversary program.

**Subseries 2, Lady of Soul Award Programs, 1995-2003**, consists of printed programs, prints, slides, and press kits with biographies and press releases honoring great women in the world of entertainment. The Lady of Soul Awards was the first-ever show format specially designed to honor female entertainers.

**Subseries 3, Christmas StarFest, 1998-1999, 2003**, consists of printed advertisements and press kits for "Soul Train" Christmas Starfest, a television special of major music stars. The press kits contain biographies, publicity prints, and slides of entertainers who participated.

**Subseries 4, Comedy Awards Program, 1993**, consists of two programs for the first annual "Soul Train" Comedy Awards. The 1993 debut was the only time the show was produced.

**Subseries 5, Divas and Kings Program, 2000**, consists of print advertisements for a special Soul Train thirtieth anniversary special featuring performances by a variety of entertainers.

**Series 2, Posters, 1989**, consists of two posters from the 1989 Soul Train Awards honoring Michael Jackson.

**Series 3, Ephemera, 1990, 2001**, consists of a tribune Entertainment Company publication, *That's Entertainment* from 1990 and newspaper clippings about Soul Train creator, Don Cornelius, *Los Angeles Times*, 2001.

---

## Arrangement

The collection is arranged into three series.

### **Series 1, Award Programs, 1987-2004**

Subseries 1, Soul Train Award Programs, 1987-2004

Subseries 2, Lady of Soul Award Programs, 1995-2003

Subseries 3, Christmas Starfest, 1998-1999, 2003

Subseries 4, Comedy Award Program, 1993

Subseries 5, Divas and Kings Program, 2000

### **Series 2, Posters, 1989**

### **Series 3, Ephemera, 1990, 2001**

---

## Bibliography

McKinley, James C. "Don Cornelius, 'Soul Train' Creator, Is Dead at 75," *New York Times*, February 1, 2012.

---

## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- African American music -- 20th century
- Award presentations
- Rhythm and blues music
- Soul music
- Soul musicians

Types of Materials:

- Articles
- Posters
- Press releases
- Programs

---

## Container Listing

### Series 1: Award Programs, 1987 - 2004

#### Subseries 1.1: Soul Train Music Award Programs, 1987 - 2004

Box 1, Folder 1	Soul Train Music Awards Program, 1987 March 23
Box 1, Folder 2	Soul Train Music Awards Program, 1988 March 30
Box 1, Folder 3	Soul Train Music Awards Program, 1989 April 12
Box 1, Folder 4	Soul Train Music Awards Program, 1990 March 14
Box 1, Folder 5	Soul Train Music Awards Program, 1992 March 10
Box 1, Folder 6	Soul Train Music Awards Program, 1993 March 9
Box 1, Folder 7	Soul Train Music Awards Program, 1994 March 15
Box 1, Folder 8	Soul Train Music Awards Program, 1995 March 13
Box 1, Folder 9	Soul Train Music Awards Program, 1995 November 22
Box 1, Folder 10	Soul Train Music Awards Program, 1996 March 26
Box 2, Folder 1	Soul Train Music Awards Program, 1997 March 7
Box 2, Folder 2	Soul Train Music Awards Program, 1998 February 27
Box 2, Folder 3	Soul Train Music Awards Program, 1999 March 26
Box 2, Folder 4	Soul Train Music Awards Program, 2000 March 4
Box 2, Folder 5	Soul Train Music Awards Program, 2001 February 28
Box 2, Folder 6	Soul Train Music Awards Program, 2002 March 20
Box 2, Folder 7	Soul Train Music Awards Program, 2003 March 1
Box 2, Folder 8	Soul Train Music Awards Program, 2004 March 20

---

#### Subseries 1.2: Lady of Soul Award Programs, 1995 - 2003

Box 3, Folder 1	Lady Soul Awards Program, 1995 August 6
-----------------	---

Box 3, Folder 2      Lady Soul Awards Program, 1996 September 9

Box 3, Folder 3      Lady Soul Awards Program, 1997

Box 3, Folder 4      Lady Soul Awards Program, 1999 September 3

Box 3, Folder 5      Lady Soul Awards Program, 2000 September 2

Box 3, Folder 6      Lady Soul Awards Program, 2002 August 24

Box 4, Folder 1      Lady Soul Award Program, 2003 August 23

---

### Subseries 1.3: Christmas Starfest Programs, 1998 - 1999, 2003

Box 4, Folder 2      Christmas Starfest Program, 1998 November 28

Box 4, Folder 3      Christmas Starfest Program, 1999 November 23

Box 4, Folder 4      Christmas Starfest Program, 2003

---

### Subseries 1.4: Comedy Awards Program, 1993

*Box 4, Folder 5*

---

### Subseries 1.5: Divas and Kings Program, 2000 August 13

*Box 4, Folder 6*

---

*[Return to Table of Contents](#)*



## Series 2: Posters

Map-folder 1

"Special Honors to Mega Star, Michael Jackson, King of Pop, Rock and Soul" (two copies), 1989 April 12

*[Return to Table of Contents](#)*

## Series 3: Ephemera, 2001, 1990

Box 4, Folder 7      That's Entertainment, 1990 Winter

Box 4, Folder 8      Newspaper clippings, 2001

*[Return to Table of Contents](#)*