

Roots Rock Society



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RRS is the brain child of Recording Academy member and Columbia College Chicago alumni Stann Champion, whose recording career started at Legends, Bob Marley's Tuff Gong studios in Jamaica in 1980 and Curtis Mayfield's Curtom studios in Chicago in 1981, when he was recruited by Chicago's first reggae band, Gypsi Fari. "This music chose me back in 1978, and I was the only guitar player in town willing to play reggae." While recording and performing in Jamaica, Stann lodged at Jacob Miller's home for 13 days where he was given a rare snapshot of Bob Marley and soon after, met The Wailers. Bob was away in Germany recovering from an illness. Stann was honored "The Playing for Peace Award" from a performance in Kingston at Third World's "Zinc Fence Theater". At that same performance, Stann met a journalist from the Jamaican Gleaner Newspaper, named Ephraim Martin. Mr. Martin so enjoyed the performance by the band from Chicago that he decided to write a story in the Gleaner hailing Gypsi Fari as Chicago's best reggae band. That article reached Canada, the U.S., Jamaica, and the U.K., and for Stann a new musical path was set. He is grateful for and cites his experience in Jamaica for his successful career. Today, Stann's songs can be heard all over the world, and he has been a forerunner with his music ever since.

Stann, no stranger to heritage and culture, is a descendant of Thomas Jefferson on his mother's side. There are the Hemmings, Redmons, Coopers and Pettifords. Also in Pennsylvania, Stann's family were private cooks for the Carnegies and Mellons in the 20's, 30's, and 40's and would travel summers to Hyannis to serve the Kennedys. Stann, being from the Redmon side, grew up a gifted child attending the Chicago Art Institute at the age of 10. There he was awarded several honorable mentions and painted a watercolor now owned by the Smithsonian Institute in Washington DC. "We grew up in a Black cultural environment" listening to a wide range of musical artists such as Miles Davis, Harry Belafonte, Wes Montgomery, Mariam Makeba, Trini Lopez and Ray Charles. Stann became attracted to Chuck Berry, B.B. King, rumba and flamenco and chose the guitar. At the age of 13, on Christmas Day, he got his first guitar and began to explore the gift of sound and song.

Always putting God first, RRS have been awarded several "Best Gospel/Spiritual Band" awards as well as "Best Band" and "Most Versatile Band" by the Chicago Music Awards. In 2002, Stann was honored with an award of "Distinction", being nominated for every year of CMA history. Later in February 2003, RRS released "Riddim to Riddim", co-produced by Stann and David Axelbaum, which won "Best Reggae CD". Every summer, Stann spends time working on Chicago's south side, where campers are lectured on the roots of instruments, storytelling and song writing. With the 2007 release of "La Familia", Stann and RRS are prepared to reach their largest audience.