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### Life

## Music makers ready for Grammys



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By MELISSA BROOKS  
Times Herald Staff

The 51st annual Grammy Awards air at 8 p.m. Sunday on CBS, and the show has plenty for local music lovers to root for.

Artists, musicians, songwriters, engineers, producers and background vocalists with Philadelphia connections accounted for 32 nominations this year.

R&B singer and Philadelphian Jazmine Sullivan was nominated for five Grammys in categories “Best New Artist,” “Best Traditional R&B Vocal Performance,” “Best Female R&B Vocal Performance,” “Best R&B Song” and “Best Contemporary R&B Album.”

Pop artist Pink, who hails from Doylestown, is up for “Best Female Vocal Performance.”

And Philly’s own Boyz II Men have a chance at winning “Best R&B Album and “Best R&B Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocals.”

But it’s singer-songwriter Jim Femino who is representing Montgomery County at music’s biggest night.

The Royersford resident who drives the 14-hour commute to Nashville co-wrote country artist James Otto’s first number one single, “Just Got Started Lovin’ You,” which Otto is nominated for “Best Male Country Vocal Performance.”

The song Femino co-wrote with Otto and songwriter D. Vincent Williams in a couple of hours during an unscheduled session became a multi-week number one hit on the Billboard Country Music chart in summer 2008.

Femino, who was leaving for Los Angeles Thursday night and planned to turn his trip to the awards ceremony into a long vacation, staying poolside until the following Wednesday, said, “From my standpoint, whether we win or not, I know it sounds corny, but I’m just thrilled to be nominated.

“You always hear people say that,” he continued, “and you think, ‘Yeah right.’ But if we win that would just be the cherry on the whip cream.”

Femino said at a recent event for the Philadelphia Chapter of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS), those with Grammy nominations were asked to stand.

“There was country, there was rap, rock, (adult contemporary), pop, ethnic ... somebody from every conceivable genre up there; that was something to see.

“It’s nice to see Philly and so many of our locals nominated,” he said. “Thirty-two is a lot of people. There aren’t that many slots to begin with, so to have that many Philly writers and artists and producers and engineers nominated is quite an honor for Philly. I don’t remember there ever being 32.

“I think it’s because it’s such a melting pot, the diversities of style — you’ve got everything in Philly. Seattle had grunge, Boston has rock, (some cities) have a folk scene, but Philly is just a hotbed of all the different genres combined.

Laughing, Femino said, “I think I’m the first country guy from Philly.”

Ambler resident Rick Denzien, who has written with Femino and is a fellow member of the Eastern Pennsylvania Chapter of Nashville Songwriters Association International, is a voting member of the Grammys.

The singer-songwriter, musician, artist and producer, whose song “Tsai” from his latest CD “Radiate” was number eight nationwide on the Adult Contemporary/Hot AC radio charts last summer, said especially in the industry’s current culture of Internet downloading, it’s great to see a fellow songwriter honored.

He explained how anyone in the music industry can join the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS) as an associate member, which makes them a card carrying, dues paying member who can participate

in various events, meet and greets and holiday parties. But to be a full, voting member of the Grammys, he said, you have to have a nationally released product.

What did it for Denzien was the 1995 Bloodhound Gang CD "Use Your Fingers," which he completed for Columbia Records from his professional recording studio, Slot-1, in Ambler.

Denzien said the Philadelphia Chapter of NARAS "started out (in the 1990s) with a huge R&B influence.

"That's a fantastic statement of how wide and how diverse our chapter really is now," he said. "It's "great to see a guy like Jim, who is a great songwriter, recognized for his song.

"More than 30 nominations out of the Philadelphia Chapter is just a testament to the creativity."

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