

BLACK AND WHITE MUSIC **CASIAN ANTON** (born July 30, 1988) Private Researcher in International Relations with concerns in the study of interdisciplinary methodology and world state. MA in *Security and International Relations* ('Lucian Blaga' University of Sibiu, Romania, 2013), BA in *International Relations and European Studies* (Petru Maior's University of Târgu Mureş, Romania, 2011), Erasmus Student to *University of Social Science and Humanities* (Warsaw, Poland, 2012-2013).

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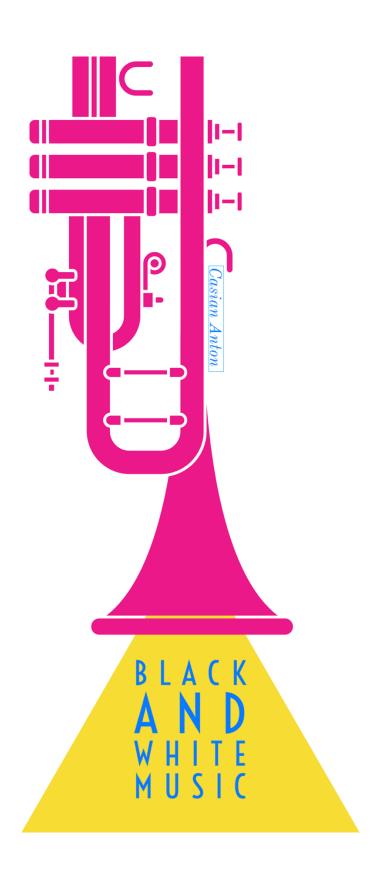
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The Famous Feud Project: Book 1 of 2

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SECOND EDITION

Pedication:

To white and black artists from this report:

'It is better to fail in originality, than to succeed in imitation. He who has never failed somewhere, that man can not be great. Failure is the true test of greatness.'

Herman Melville (1850)

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FOREWORD: a new FAMOUS journey

Between 2004 and 2005 RBD was one of the bands I listened to on the DVD bought by my older brother, Traian. During the music session, I preferred to lock the door, cover the small square windows with a thick black & red blanket, so that no light or uninvited eyes could see in. The light was turned off most of the time, and either I sat on the bed or I walked around the room. In the music of RBD, and later other artists (such as David Guetta, and Benny Benassi) which I discovered through tv channels, I found a path full of instruments and lyrics which enhanced my thinking skills, and allowed me to understand and develop my own personality, but also to create my own lifestyle in a colourful form.

As a child, I was hooked by the lyrics of songs, instruments and the life of my favorite artists. In Sighișoara, across the street from the Policlinică, right next to the grey cement stairs leading to the walled citadel, there was a small shop made of wood and plastic with newspapers and magazines. I don't remember the saleswoman's name, but I know that she never refused my honest request to read for free any magazines or newspapers; however, I had to follow a simple rule: 'don't bend the pages', which I nailed it everytime. In these pages, I found magnetic stories about my favorite artists, or information considered to be piquant and incognito. When the magazines were wrapped in a thin transparent plastic bag, the saleswoman used to rip off the bag for me. Most of the time, I preferred to sit alone on the weather-beaten bench near the store. However, once in a blue moon I was asked by friends to borrow other magazines than what I was habitually exploring, and I did it every time with the endorsement of the saleswoman. At this point in life, I wasn't interested in the history of

music. I was pleased with participating in the school choir which, thanks to my teacher, met every year during the winter, spring and national holidays; in the beginning, we were a jam-packed group of boys and girls, but, for like 3 years, I was the only boy in the group. Around age 17 I decided to break away from the group.

Even today I am not predisposed in the history of music, but in these pages, having reached the multicultural world of England and the competition between races, cultures and religions, I decided to travel behind the musical notes of the artists used by the Western massmedia as examples of racial discrimination in the music industry of the United States of America (henceforth USA). The first version of this edition was a chapter in the research on the feud between Taylor Swift and Kanye West¹, but, in July 2021, I changed my mind and created an expanded and independent version; eventually, I incorporated extra research elements of songs and albums released by black and white artists.

I am delighted to have been able to make, I hope, a modest and all-purpose contribution to the discussion of the awards and allegations of discrimination and racism in the music industry of the USA. Black & White Music help us to see and understand another side of the origin and quality of the music released. Black & White Music can be better understood and appreciated by listening to all the albums analysed in these pages, and by reading the reviews written by experts in music.

I wish you a bright FAMOUS journey.

CASIAN ANTON

¹ Casian Anton, On the Famous Feud, 2023.

Introduction: music and white privilege

The Recording Academy was formally established in 1957 with the purpose to recognise and award achievements in the music industry in the USA. In the last 64 years the Grammy Awards (created by the Recording Academy) have gained an impressive prestige. The number of awards have been changed over the years with categories added and removed depending on various events that have had a positive or negative impact on the music industry and the artists. The Grammy Awards is considered the most significant event in the music industry of the USA, and most of the artists nominated dream to be recognised for their music (which expresses creativity, talent, originality and value).²

THE NARRATIVE OF RACISM AGAINST THE RECORDING ACADEMY

Articles published in popular newspapers and magazines argue with examples in which the contribution of black artists in the music industry is not recognised and celebrated as often as it happens with the contribution of the white artists. For example, since the Grammy Awards (1957-2021) ten black artists have won the *Album of the Year* award; this number is promoted negatively (only ten) because, for black artists and their supporters, the actual number of albums that should have received this recognition is higher. Moreover, black artists have a superb presence in charts³, for example Billboard charts in the USA, and yet the number of nominations and winnings for the Grammy Awards was lower than their presence in charts. In 2021 Samantha Hissong wrote an extensive article for the Rolling Stone with a vital point of view about the music industry in the USA:

'It's beyond the Grammys,' says Smith. 'The Grammy Awards are the pinnacle. But they're a part of this system that has been built with white superiority in mind, like all of our other systems in this country."

In the last five years various articles on an resentful tone have been written about the white privilege in the music industry from USA. The main idea of these articles is the existence of a privilege that the white artists benefit, a privilege that lacks, or it is at a lower level for black artists and other minorities.⁵ In 2015 Raquel Cepeda wrote an article for Rolling Stone:

² Tatum Herrin, 'The Grammys' Casual Racism Has Gone on for Too Long', *The Coat of Arms*, May 12, 2021, available at: https://menlocoa.org/20626/opinions/the-grammys-casual-racism-has-gone-on-for-too-long/, last accessed: July 26, 2021.

³ It is based on the numbers of songs/albums sold every week and it is difficult to show if the higher number of sales is equal with high quality of the song/album.

⁴ Samantha Hissong, 'The Crisis Behind the All-White Grammy Category', *Rolling Stone*, January 7, 2021, available at: https://www.rollingstone.com/pro/features/grammys-2021-childrens-music-controversy-1109502/, last accessed: July 25, 2021. ⁵ See for example: Lizzy Wan, 'Racial bias in the Grammys impacts our generation', *The Burling Game B*, April 2, 2021, available at: https://theburlingameb.org/4029/showcase/racial-bias-in-the-grammys-impacts-our-generation/, last accessed: July 25, 2021; 'Accusations of racial bias in Grammy Awards', *Wikipedia*, available at:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Accusations_of_racial_bias_in_Grammy_Awards, last accessed: July 25, 2021. Natalie Harmsen, 'Goodbye, Grammys: Why Black artists think the awards show is irrelevant', *Global News*, February 24, 2021, available at: https://globalnews.ca/news/7617502/grammys-award-music-relevance/, last accessed: July 26, 2021. Cassie Owens, 'Do the

'WHITE PEOPLE REJOICE! You've managed to cold-jack yet another awards season, and in February no less. The Oscars will be whiter than they've been since 1998, and this year the Grammy Awards promise to be a throwback to that time when Shirley Temple got down in blackface – dumb-stoopid-affected accents and all. 6

At the same time, another important opinion against the outcome advanced by The Recording Academy is the possible existence of an unfair intention to diminish the importance of albums promoted by black artists that, according to a visible number of specialists in music along with black artists and their supporters, had a significant cultural impact at least in the USA; there are albums that were not nominated in the categories they belong to, or they were nominated but did not win the Grammy Award. For a visible number of black artists and their supporters this attitude and position of The Recording Academy is most of the time labelled as 'racist phenomenon', 'corrupt' and 'unfair'. The first example I have is Nicki Minaj (black female artist) who in 2020 wrote on Twitter about her experience:

'Never forget the Grammys didn't give me my best new artist award when I had 7 songs simultaneously charting on billboard & bigger first week than any female rapper in the last decade- went on to inspire a generation. They gave it to the white man Bon Iver. #PinkFriday;'⁷

A second example is *The Weeknd* (black male artist) who expressed his dissatisfaction with the decision of The Recording Academy to not nominate at all ('zero nomination' to use the words spread on Twitter by his supporters) his album *After Hours* for Grammy Awards⁸:

'The Grammys remain corrupt. You owe me, my fans and the industry transparency...'9

Samantha Hissong has a clear example where black artists are not nominated in the category they belong:

'Only white artists were nominated for Best Children's Album – and three of them have asked to be taken off the ballot. Artists of color in children's music are fed up with the genre's homogeneity: 'It's like being served a baked potato with fries and hash browns on the side,' says one black artist.'

'Meanwhile, [Latin duo] 123 Andrés is over here with their flavor, we've got some Jamaican flavor, we've got hip-hop. These are different elements and aspects that bring a richness to the genre but are being systematically excluded.'10

Grammys have a diversity problem?', Inquirer, January 24, 2020, available at:

https://www.inquirer.com/entertainment/inq2/grammys-2020-awards-nominees-predictions-history-lizzo-billie-eilish-20200124.html, last accessed: July 26, 2021. Jon Caramanica, '#GrammysSoWhite Came to Life. Will the Awards Face Its Race Problem?', The New York Times, February 13, 2017, available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/13/arts/music/grammys-adele-beyonce-black-artists-race.html, last accessed: July 26, 2021.

⁶ Raquel Cepeda, 'Do the Grammys Have a Race Problem?', Rolling Stone, February 5, 2015, available at:

https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/do-the-grammys-have-a-race-problem-62956/, last accessed: July 26, 2021.

⁷ Nicki Minaj, 'Message on Twitter', *Twitter*, November 24, 2020, available at:

https://twitter.com/NICKIMINAJ/status/1331315767967551488?lang=en, last accessed: July 26, 2021; Elizabeth Aubrey, 'Nicki Minaj takes aim at the Grammys as she remembers her 2012 loss', NME, November 25, 2020, available at:

https://www.nme.com/news/music/nicki-minaj-takes-aim-at-the-grammys-as-she-remembers-her-2012-loss-2824940, last accessed: July 26, 2021.

⁸ After Hours set several records in the music industry from the USA: it topped the charts with the song *Blinding Lights* for most weeks spent in top five of the Billboard Hot 100.

⁹ The Weeknd, 'Message on Twitter', *Twitter*, November 25, 2020, available at:

https://twitter.com/theweeknd/status/1331394452447870977?lang=en-GB, last accessed: July 26, 2021.

¹⁰ Samantha Hissong, 'The Crisis Behind the All-White Grammy Category'.

A quick look at the method of deciding the winners of the Grammy Awards and the narrative about institutional racism, exposes an intrigue storyline where the true projection of the allegations of discrimination and racism are rather highlighting the voting members of the The Recording Academy: this happens because the voting members have the power to vote the winners of the Grammy Awards, and not the Co-Chairs, the Steering Committee and the Advisory Council. The Recording Academy offers the guidelines and the instructions to the voting members, for which outcome is difficult, if not impossible, to be blamed. The Recording Academy presents at the ceremony the choices voted by its members and, therefore, only the voting members can be accused of discrimination and racism against black artists, but also other minorities.

The voting members are artists from various races, cultures and religious backgrounds. After reading several articles and posts on social media (Facebook, Twitter and Reddit), I extracted four levels of the allegations of discrimination and racism advanced mostly by black artist and their supporters against The Recording Academy and its voting members:

- the allegations of discrimination and racism are spread from black artists and their supporters, along with critics in music toward and in reference to white artists; this is completed on the assumption that black artists are not and cannot have a discriminatory or racist attitude toward and in reference to white artists;
- 2. there is an absolute and ultimate point of view in which the choices and the vote of black artists is to a higher extent right, and they deserve the award because the black artists expressed the opinion about it, or there is a visible endorsement by a number of experts and critics in music (outside The Recording Academy), and should be seen as the final truth; the choices and the votes of the white artists are not correct and fair, and are presented most of the time as being made up on the basis of discrimination and racism against black artists;
- 3. there is a *Spiral of Silence*¹¹ in favour of the contribution and the artistic merit of black artists at the expense of the contribution and the artistic merit of white artists; this is a highly wrong strategy of presentation of the issue of discrimination and racism because, whatever the contribution and artistic merit that white artists may produce, it is never good enough to earn the awards; from this point of view, the white artists are forevermore the artists who should not be awarded; subsequently, in this level, the white artists are accused of being inspired by black artists (create original music) and are taking advantage and profit from their music creation; most of the time, there is no mention of black artists being inspired and using the artistic creation of the white artists;
- 4. the only way for The Recording Academy to be seen and presented in good terms is to follow the outcome written by mass-media, critics outside The Recording Academy, and the opinions of black artists and their supporters.

The examples above represents a tiny part of the negative narrative about the outcome advanced against the voting members and The Recording Academy, however, I hope, it is enough for

¹¹ More information about The Spiral of Silence, see: 'Spiral of Silence', Wikipedia, available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spiral_of_silence#:~:text=It%20states%20that%20an%20individual%27s,others%20to%20express%2 Otheir%20opinions., last accessed: October 24, 2020; 'The Spiral of Silence Theory', Communication Theory, available at: https://www.communicationtheory.org/the-spiral-of-silence-theory/, last accessed: October 24, 2020.

readers to create a small wave of awareness and understanding about the existent issues in the music industry in the USA.

THE LITERATURE ABOUT THE WINNERS OF THE GRAMMY AWARDS

Based on this research, there are four debate camps (from higher to lower number of supporters involved in the debates) about the winners of the Grammy Awards:

the first debate camp (higher as number of supporters): it is an overall opinion about who should win the award;

- in this camp the knowledge of the writer is presented as mostly being true;
- there is no specific analysis based on a specific methodology to find substantial
 evidence to support the opinion; in this case, the opinion advanced creates (maybe
 inevitable and with no direct intention) a feel of 'gaslighting' than 'enlightening', where
 every person of interest feel the need to say something good or bad about an artist;
- this camp is spread and used to a minor extent by journalists as well and, definitely
 more, by supporters of the artists which dream for their favourite artists to be awarded
 with a Grammy Award;

the second debate camp (lower as number of supporters than the first debate camp): it is based on conclusions acquired after using a specific methodology (either created and used by specialists in statistics, instruments and lyrics, or by fans and ordinary people interested in getting a in-depth understanding of the outcome);

- in this camp, the knowledge is considered to have a higher quality and version of truth than the knowledge in the first debate camp;
- the methodology is clearly stated in the opinion, and it is difficult to argue against it; however, if there is an argument against the opinion, then it is based on the methodology applied where most of the time it consist on (from high to low importance and use):
- 1. mathematical calculations: the artists and their supporters can be against this method due to its nature of snapshotting music in numbers (may be considered as a limited way of thinking, because music is more than numbers);
- 2. questioning the ability of the artists to write and sing the songs released: this involves opinions based on reviews of songs and albums written by experts in music, and available online in magazines with an experience in reviewing music, or close to this topic of interest; subsequently, to some extent, it includes the personal opinion of the supporter: at this point (this part of debate enters also in the first debate camp) depends on how well the opinion is formulated and if a method of research was applied;
 - this camp it is used both by journalists and supporters who prefer to have better reasons to advance an argument in favour or against the decision of The Recording Academy;

the third debate camp (made only by the voting members of The Recording Academy): it is based on the knowledge about music that the members of The Recording Academy have and it is self-considered as holder of the final truth about the right winners;

• this position of the *self-holder* of *truth* is based directly on its *voting members* which includes 'performers, songwriters, producers, engineers, instrumentalists, and other

creators currently working in the recording industry; voting members determine Grammy winners each year; 12

the fourth debate camp is the critics and their reviews (lowest number among all other three debate camps; depends on the number of reviews written for an album, it can include one review to as many as possible¹³) available on various websites with content in the music industry;

- as with the third debate, this is also *self-considered as holder of the final truth* about the right winners;
- this position of the self-holder of truth is based directly on the main critic as being an
 expert in music, and (from the research conducted) without being an artist with proven
 songs and albums that are considered by other critics and artists as the best, or the worst
 contribution in the music industry;
- the most used platforms with reviews written by experts in music and available online are Metacritic¹⁴ and All Music¹⁵;
- this debate camp is used more by the second debate camp to advance their opinions with a higher value of truth.

Each year, between all these four debate camps, there is a thin line that it is crossed intentionally and unintentionally and are caught in a war of winners; the 'artistic merit war' is on three levels:

the first level: it is between the first and the second debate camps; these two debate camps advance powerful opinions which are able to gaslight and uplift artists and supporters;

the second level: it is between the third and the fourth debate camp: here it is a battle of artists and experts in music where sometimes the winners are not the ones predicted by critics outside The Recording Academy; this contradiction creates amongs supporters and artists a visible wave of untrust in both sources;

the third level: it is a mix between all four debates camps to justify the outcome of the awards.

THE AIM OF THE RESEARCH

This report is in the same bubble of research with other articles and reports published about the issues of awards and allegations of discrimination and racism in the music industry in the USA. I started by mentioning few articles that can provide a better overview of this bubble of research; at the same time, I offered a reason of rejecting or accepting articles as part of my research interest. In the last part of this section, I developed the full aim of the research.

¹² The Recording Academy, Recording Academy Membership, Membership Types, available at:

https://members.recordingacademy.com/s/?language=en_US, last accessed: July 26, 2021.

¹³ I could not find a clear reason of why some artists have more reviews than others; however, I identified a pattern: to a certain level the reviews depends also on the popularity of the artists; if the artist is new in the music industry: the reviews can present the abilities of the new artist and the outcome of the album, which can support the artist to be appreciated more or less by fans and the general public.

¹⁴ Metacritic, https://www.metacritic.com.

¹⁵ All Music, https://www.allmusic.com.

• In 2014, Aimee Cliff wrote for *The Fader* the article 10 Reasons *The Grammys Are As White As You Think They Are* which are divided in two parts: *Historically* (reasons 1 to 5) and *In 2014* (reasons 6 to 10):

'1. Fewer than 20 percent of Album of the Year awards have gone to black artist; 2. It took them 10 years to recognize rap; 3. Only three Album of the Year awards have ever been given to hip-hop records; 4. Kanye hasn't been up for Album of the Year since Graduation; 5. The people picking the winners are out of touch; 6. Every Best New Artist nominee is white; 7. Every Record of the Year and Song of the Year nominee is white; 8. It's not a case of black artists not selling as much as white artists; 9. The Grammys are still using "urban" to denote "black"; 10. White artists making music influenced by black culture get treated differently.' 16

this research is on the same line with Aimee Cliff's article: history and facts, but with a distinctive difference: Aimee focused on facts from before and until 2014, while I used data from 2003 to 2022 and investigated few white and black artists who topped the charts and are considered, by The Recording Academy and various experts in music, as one of the best artists in the music industry in the USA;

• the article written by Raquel Cepeda for Rolling Stone in 2015:

'WHITE PEOPLE REJOICE! You've managed to cold-jack yet another awards season, and in February no less. The Oscars will be whiter than they've been since 1998, and this year the Grammy Awards promise to be a throwback to that time when Shirley Temple got down in blackface – dumb-stoopid-affected accents and all.'17

Raquel Cepeda is entitled to her own view and strategy of presentation of the issue with black artists being less awarded in comparison with white artists, but her article does not have substantial evidence to allow her to manifest the issue with the sentence 'WHITE PEOPLE REJOICE! You've managed to cold-jack yet another awards season': this is a general view which implies that all white people from the USA are to blame for the outcome; this position is wrong as The Recording Academy, and other institutions in the music industry in the USA, have a number of members with experience in music; where there is the option for the general public to vote for their favourite artists, and the white artist win the award, you cannot blame the people for their choices; however, the information used in this research allowed me to create a chapter, What If, where I wrote various hypothetical and negative scenarios based on the in-depth research advanced in these pages;

• this research does not go on the line with Ira Madison III who wrote in 2018 for *The Daily Beast* an interesting point of view about the outcome in the music industry; his article is a short history of the albums included or which should be included for the Grammy Awards; however, what is lacking is the same as Raquel's article: substantial evidence achieved after using a specific methodology which allows an in-depth investigation about the music that should or should have not win the award; he title has the word 'hell', but Ira Madison III spectacularly failed to actually prove that the Grammys are 'racists as hell' as the mentioning of albums, and a short comparison about the names of the albums and the race of the artists, barely scratches the surface of the award issue and discrimination and racism in The Recording Academy; all in all, I find Ira Madison III

¹⁸ Ira Madison III, 'The Grammy Awards Are Racist as Hell', *The Daily Beast*, January 28, 2018, available at: https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-grammy-awards-are-racist-as-hell, last accessed: July 25, 2021.

¹⁶ Aimee Cliff, '10 Reasons The Grammys Are As White As You Think They Are', *The Fader*, December 12, 2014, available at: https://www.thefader.com/2014/12/12/10-reasons-the-grammys-are-as-white-as-you-think-they-are, last accessed: July 25, 2021. ¹⁷ Raquel Cepeda, 'Do the Grammys Have a Race Problem?'

interest to be worthy of research, but his technique of approach does not help to expose a credible storyline of the allegations of discrimination and racism advanced by black artists and their supporters.

After reading various articles about the Grammy Awards (some mentioned above) in the USA's mass-media, I reached the following conclusions: the articles that I read are written from 'he said / she said' perspective, and there is a visible lack of focus on neutral articles with solid methodology to advance an in-depth and credible storyline to better support the allegations of discrimination and racism. I had no other option than to extend the research beyond USA's mass-media. I selected two articles and one report. The first two articles were published by two journalists, one from UK and one from USA; the third source is a report published in the USA by a university.

1. Chris Sweeney (from Scotland) is an author and columnist who has written for newspapers such as The Times, The Sun, the Daily Record and Nut Magazine from UK, along with several international-selling magazines: in 2020 he wrote the article 'The Grammys aren't racist, claiming so is just a cynical attempt to play the race card' for Russia Today; however, since he wrote for mass-media from the UK before and after 2020 and other international magazines, it must mean that his analysis are based on the principle of truth and honour in the field of journalism.

Chris Sweeney made few important points of view, however, I mentioned two of them, since there are good examples to support his view:

in the first example, Chris Sweeney mentioned the race of the artists nominated where 'diversity' is the main key term of The Recording Academy:

'The shortlist for the most prestigious award, Record of the Year, is really varied. Beyonce is there, along with soul duo Black Pumas, who are black singer Eric Burton and latino musician Adrian Quesada. Others include; Dua Lipa (British with Kosovan heritage), Da Baby (black American), Doja Cat (Jewish American mother/South African Zulu father), Billie Eilish (white American), Megan Thee Stallion (black American from Texas) and Post Malone (white American with Italian roots).

the second example is based on statistics:

'America's population is crudely divided into; White (60 percent), Black (13 percent), Asian (6 percent), Hispanic (18 percent) and American Indian (1.3 percent). So if we go by the logic of connecting impact to race, then so-called white music and white artists would dominate.²⁰

this research is in the same bubble of research presented by Chris Sweeney, however, only from the point of view of statistics, but again with a distinctive difference: Chris Sweeney used the statistics already existent and related to population percentage, while I created statistics based on elements such as the race of the artists, songs and albums caught in the middle of the conflict about the outcome of The Recording Academy and which song/artists and album should win or not.

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¹⁹ Chris Sweeney, 'The Grammys aren't racist, claiming so is just a cynical attempt to play the race card', *Russia Today*, November 27, 2020, available at: https://www.rt.com/op-ed/508053-drake-weeknd-grammys-racism/, last accessed: July 25, 2021.
²⁰ Ibidem.

2. Michael McCaffrey is a freelance writer, film critic and cultural commentator. He currently resides in Los Angeles where he runs his acting coaching and media consulting business: the use of statistics and being a freelancer in the USA (with many good articles written) was a good reason for me to consider his interest as being genuine, and for the benefits of all the parts interested and involved in the research about the outcome of The Recording Academy. Black & White Music is in the same bubble of the research advanced by Michael McCaffrey, but with a different point of view. Michael McCafrey investigation is about finding a relations in terms of population percentage (as Chris Sweeney) and representation in awards; in his own words, he investigated:

'to see if Black artists are under-represented in awards in relation to their population percentage;'21

Black & White Music is an investigation about the sources and origins of the music released by 8 white and black artists. After exposing various statistics about the race of the artists nominated at the Grammy Awards and population percentage, Michael McCaffrey wrote the following conclusion:

'It is obvious upon reviewing the data that, over the last 30 years, Black artists are, in fact, substantially overrepresented at the Grammys in relation to their percentage of the US population.'²²

Finally, this research is also in the bubble of interest and research with the study conducted by 3. The USC Annenberg Inclusion from University of South Carolina: Inclusion in the Recording Studio? Gender and Race/Ethnicity of Artists, Songwriters & Producers across 900 Popular Songs from 2012-2020. The lead researchers, Dr. Stacy L. Smith, Dr. Katherine Pieper, Marc Choueiti, Karla Hernandez & Kevin Yao, came to various conclusions, but for this research I picked one that I find to have a connection with the last two authors:

'Black performers represented about 38% of all artists on Billboard's signature chart from 2012 to 2020, yet they received only 26.7% of top Grammy nominations during the same period. Only 24% of this year's top Grammy nominees were Black'.²³

If Chris Sweeney and Michael McCaffrey used the percentage population and representation in the awards, the *Inclusion in the Recording Studio?* used the percentage from charts and the reflection in number of nominations, *Black & White Music* used the sources and origins of the music to reach new conclusions about the awards and allegations of discrimination and racism in the music industry in the USA.

From *Inclusion in the Recording Studio?*, I understand that the right way and fairness for black artists and for The Recording Academy, it is to have the same percentage in nominations as on charts. I reached this understanding due to the overall view and conclusions on the report, but also by the keyword used in the conclusions: 'only', which for me is suggesting that the percentage should be higher.

²³ The full report can be read online: Dr. Stacy L. Smith, Dr. Katherine Pieper, Marc Choueiti, Karla Hernandez & Kevin Yao, *Inclusion in the Recording Studio? Gender and Race/Ethnicity of Artists, Songwriters & Producers across 900 Popular Songs from 2012-2020,* March 2021, The USC Annenberg Inclusion, University of South Carolina, available at: https://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-inclusion-recording-studio2021.pdf, last accessed: July 26, 2021.

²¹ Michael McCaffrey, '#GrammysSoWhite: Is White privilege really repressing Black entertainers?', *Russia Today*, February 26, 2017, available at: https://www.rt.com/op-ed/378651-grammys-oscars-favor-whites/, last accessed: July 25, 2021.

²² Ibidem.

However, *Inclusion in the Recording Studio?* does not take into consideration the quality of the music released. From this perspective, in the music industry in the USA there are various albums with high grades from critics, yet they fail to achieve and maintain top 3 or 10 in Billboard charts for long term. For example Fiona Apple's album in 2020, *Fetch the Bolt Cutters*: Fiona has one of the highest overall grade in the music industry on Metacritic with 98 out of 100 based on 28 critic reviews, but her album sold in the first week in the USA 44,000 equivalent albums unit; eventually, Fiona Apple's album was number 4 on the USA Billboard 200.²⁴ On the other hand, there are albums with lower grades from critics. For example Beyoncé for her debut album, *Dangerously in Love*, won five Grammy Awards even though *The Guardian* gave her album 40 points out of 100 on Metacritic, the overall grade for her album is 63 out of 100 based on 17 critic reviews²⁵; for Beyoncé first-week sales in the USA was 317,000 album copies, and in the following months and years to reach over 11 millions of albums sold worldwide.²⁶

Based on the information used to create Figure 1, I can identify and show the precise locations of my research in the bubble of the research interests in the music industry in the USA.

Dr. Stacy L. Smith acknowledged that popularity of a song doesn't always equate with its *artistic merit*. ²⁷ I extracted the words *artistic merit*, because this is main aim of the research in these pages. However, to be able to research the artistic merit, I have to interfere in the narrative line of other research interests in the music industry, which is the only way to *see* and *understand* the *artistic merit*.

The music industry in the USA (the figure is created using this information) is formed from individuals and organisation such as: 'lyricists, composers, singers, musicians, conductors, bandleaders who perform the music, the record labels, music publishers, recording studios, music producers, audio engineers, retail and digital music stores, performance rights organizations who create and sell recorded music and sheet music, the booking agents, promoters, music venues, road crew, and audio engineers who help organize and sell concerts;'²⁸ other research interests included in the music industry are the race of the musicians and other professional categories, the awarding institutions and their voting members, the conventional wisdom and critics (inside and outside The Recording Academy).

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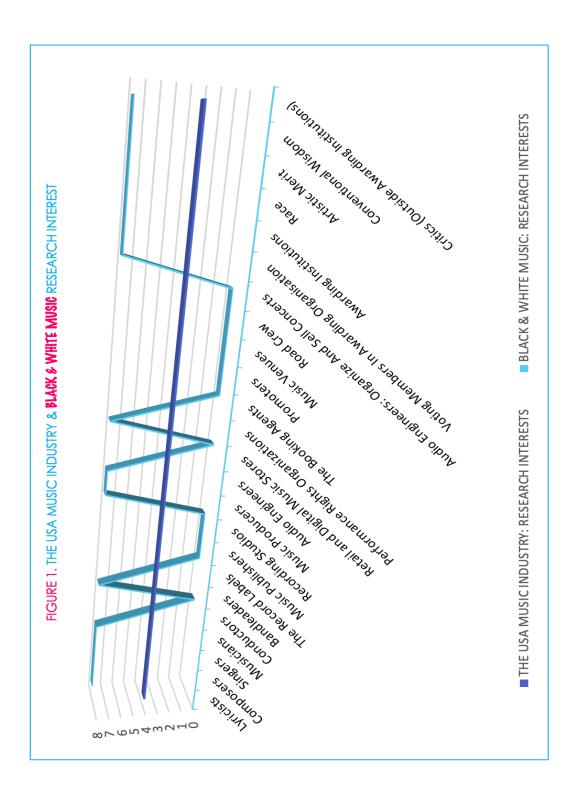
²⁴ Fiona Apple, 'Fetch the Bolt Cutters', *Wikipedia*, available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fetch_the_Bolt_Cutters, last accessed: July 26, 2021. 'Of that sum, 30,000 are in album sales, 13,000 are in SEA units and less than 1,000 are in TEA units'.

²⁵ Read: Adam Sweeting, 'Review: Beyonce Knowles: Dangerously in Love', *The Guardian*, June 27, 2003, 2 stars out of 5, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/music/2003/jun/27/popandrock.artsfeatures8, last accessed: July 26, 2021; 'Beyoncé: Dangerously in Love', *Metacritic*, June 24, 2003, available at: https://www.metacritic.com/music/dangerously-in-love/beyonce, last accessed: July 26, 2021.

²⁶ Beyoncé, 'Dangerously in Love', *Wikipedia*, available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dangerously_in_Love, last accessed: July 26, 2021.

²⁷ Chauncey Alcorn, 'The Grammys rarely award chart-topping Black artists with top honors, new study finds', CNN, March 9, 2021, available at: https://edition.cnn.com/2021/03/09/media/grammys-diversity/index.html, last accessed: July 26, 2021.

²⁸ 'Music industry', Wikipedia, available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_industry, last accessed: June 26, 2021.



Black & White Music's research interests are in the following research interests of the music industry in the USA:

- *lyricists* (in terms of number of lyricists, including the main vocal artists length of songs written by the main vocal artists),
- composers (in terms of number of lyricists, including the main vocal artists),
- singers (black and white),
- musicians (black and white),
- bandleaders (more for Macklemore & Ryan),
- *music producers* (the number of producers in the creation of the song and the album, the main vocal artist included),
- audio engineers (in terms of samples),
- performance rights organizations who create and sell recorded music and sheet music (in terms of song and album sales),
- the race (the main vocal artists investigated in this report, producers and lyricists, allegations of discrimination and racism),
- the awarding institutions and their voting members (The Recording Academy),
- conventional wisdom (advanced and supported by black artists and their supporters),
- and critics (a short comparison based on the number of existent critics inside and
 outside the awarding institutions; in this part, 'critics' is also use with the meaning of
 'voting member', since the voting member performed a critique, based on own abilities,
 about the final choices regarding the award).

In terms of number of artists investigated (8) from total number of musicians (9603)²⁹, I used:

- Black artists (3): Kanye West, Beyoncé, Kendrick Lamar,
- White artists (5): Taylor Swift, Adele, Beck, Macklemore & Ryan (it is a group, but I calculated as sole individual):

this research investigated around 0.09% of the total number of musicians in the USA;

from the point of view of race, this research investigated around 0.03% black artists, and 0.05% white artists;

from the point of view of camp debates, **Black & White Music's** research interest is the second debate camp because the 'conclusions were acquired after using a specific methodology to find new information about the artistic merit of the artists investigated';

from the point of view of 'artistic merit war', **Black & White Music's** is in the **third level**: it is a mix between all four debates camps to justify the outcome of the awards.

In *Black & White Music* report I investigated a very small part of the music industry from the USA, 0.09% musicians; more precisely, I investigated the contribution and the artistic merit (greater or lesser) of black artists (0.03%) and white artists (0.05%) in the production and writing of their albums. The artists investigated in this report are Taylor Swift, Kanye West, Beyoncé, Kendrick Lamar, Macklemore & Ryan, Adele and Beck. I selected these artists because the music produced

²⁹ 'Musician Demographic and Statistics in the US', *Zippia*, available at: https://www.zippia.com/musician-jobs/demographics/#race-statistics, last accessed: August 3, 2022.

and released by them was used by various artists and journalists as examples of allegations of discrimination and racism which takes place in the music industry in the USA. For example, Kendrick Lamar (black man) was promoted by western journalists the winner of the *Best Rap Album* days before the 2014 ceremony, but was defeated by Macklemore & Ryan (white artists), and in 2016 by Taylor Swift (white artist); Beyoncé (black artist) lost in 2015 to Beck (white artist) and in 2017 she lost to Adele (white artist from UK, but nominated for Grammy Awards in various categories); although he had one of the most recommended and positive reviewed albums of his life (*My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy*) and in the music industry, Kanye West's album was not nominated for *Album of the Year*. In other words, today's music industry is caught in a difficult situation that is severely undermining The Recording Academy's credibility and the Grammy Awards.

The aim of the research is split into 2 levels:

in the first level: I explored, analysed and created a comparative study about the contribution and the artistic merit of black and white artists in the production and writing of their albums; to achieve this aim, I added contribution and artistic merit into one bubble of research and treated the two concepts with the same meaning, then I divided the bubble into 8 points of research that

a. created a general view of the contribution and artistic merit of the artists investigated

and b. granted the opportunity to observe and identify areas of the music production where one artists is greater or lesser than others;

the 8 points of research were used to show (within the limits of the information used):

- 1. the creativity, originality and novelty of the investigated artists;
- 2. the artist(s) with a greater contribution in the production and writing of a song(s) and album(s) that have been released;
- 3. whether the awards and recognition offered by the USA music industry are based on originality, creativity and novelty in music, or are offered based on the colour of the skin;
- 4. what are the differences between the music recognized by receiving an award, and the music that did not receive an award, but was nominated for the music award (either by the vote of the general public, or by the vote of the members of the jury);
- 5. whether the loss of the award is a direct and personal non-recognition of the black artist(s) who performed the song(s) and under whose name the song(s) and album(s) were released;
- 6. whether the loss of the award is a direct and personal non-recognition of the black producer(s) and lyricist(s) who created a part(s) (or full) of a song(s) and the album(s);
- 7. reasons that may justify why white artists received more recognition than black artists in the music industry (only the artists in this report and Grammy Awards: Album of the Year, Best Rap Album; MTV Awards: Beyoncé (Single Ladies (Put a Ring On It), If I were a Boy) versus Taylor Swift (You Belong With Me, The Man) regarding the originality of these songs;

8. in the music industry, among fans and critics there is a conventional wisdom attached and used toward and in reference to Kanye West: 'one of the greatest artists of all time'; in this point of research, I challenged this conventional wisdom attached to Kanye West; furthermore, I extended the conventional wisdom to Taylor Swift through a comparative analysis between her and Kanye West's music.

in the second level is about using the findings from the eight points of research to offer a response to three conventional wisdom advanced by black artists and their supporters against the rules and awards offered by The Recording Academy:

- 1. the higher recognition in the music industry received by the white artists is not about the quality and originality of their music, but because of the colour of their skin; in other words, the white artists received the higher recognition because the institution behind the awards is ruled by white people;³⁰
- 2. black artists create music and white artists take advantage and profit from their creation;³¹
- 3. black artists need to work twice as much to get half, or the same as white artists.³²

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS:

• this report is the first part of the research project named *The Famous Feud Project*³³; this report it is unique and original which investigates the artistic merit of six of the best artists in the music industry of the USA; in these pages, there is an advanced comparative analysis of the music released by famous artists that was never done before using the elements described in methodology;

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³⁰ This argument was created based on the mix of ideas from the following articles: Tatum Herrin, 'The Grammys' Casual Racism Has Gone on for Too Long'; Samantha Hissong, 'The Crisis Behind the All-White Grammy Category'; Lizzy Wan, 'Racial bias in the Grammys impacts our generation'; Natalie Harmsen, Goodbye, 'Grammys: Why Black artists think the awards show is irrelevant'; Jon Caramanica, '#GrammysSoWhite Came to Life. Will the Awards Face Its Race Problem?'.

³¹ This argument was created based on the mix of ideas from the following articles: Jasmine Garsd, 'Music industry confronts calls to 'make things right' for Black artists', *Marketplace*, August 6, 2020, available at:

https://www.marketplace.org/2020/08/06/music-industry-confronts-calls-make-things-right-for-black-artists/, last accessed: July 26, 2021; Wesley Morris, 'Why is Everyone Always Stealing Black Music?, *The New York Times*, August 14, 2019, available at: https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/music-black-culture-appropriation.html, last accessed: July 26, 2021; Elias Leight, 'The Music Industry Was Built on Racism. Changing It Will Take More Than Donations', *Rolling Stone*, June 5, 2020, available at: https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-features/music-industry-racism-1010001/, last accessed: July 26, 2021; Ruka Hatua-Saar White, 'Cultural Appropriation in Music', *Take Note from Berklee Online*, February 1, 2020, available at: https://online.berklee.edu/takenote/cultural-appropriation-in-music/; last accessed: July 26, 2020; Chris Jancelewicz, 'The 'whitewashing' of Black music: A dark chapter in rock history', *Global News*, July 30, 2019, available at: https://globalnews.ca/news/4321150/black-music-whitewashing-classic-rock/, last accessed: July 26, 2021.

³² This argument was created based on the mix of ideas from the following articles: Britni Danielle, 'Michelle Obama's 'twice as good' speech doesn't cut it with most African Americans', *The Guardian*, May 12, 2015, available at:

https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/may/12/michelle-obama-twice-as-good-african-americans-black-people, last accessed: July 26, 2021; Gillian B. White, 'Black Workers Really Do Need to Be Twice as Good', The Atlantic, October 7, 2015, available at: https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/10/why-black-workers-really-do-need-to-be-twice-as-good/409276/, last accessed: July 26, 2021; Elias Leight, 'Separate and Unequal': How 'Pop' Music Holds Black Artists Back', Rolling Stone, June 17, 2020, available at: https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-features/the-problem-with-pop-1013534/, last accessed: July 26, 2021; Charles Stephens, 'When Black Professionals Must Work Twice as Hard', Advocate, March 19, 2019, available at: https://www.advocate.com/commentary/2018/3/19/when-black-professionals-must-work-twice-hard, last accessed: July 26, 2021; Jamilah Malika Abu-Bakare, 'How Black artists use citational art to build upon one another's legacies', CBC, February 1, 2022, available at: https://www.cbc.ca/arts/how-black-artists-use-citational-art-to-build-upon-one-another-s-legacies-1.6329781, last accessed: July 22, 2022.

³³ The second part is Casian Anton, On the Famous Feud, 2023.

- this report was born out of the urgent need to confront and challenge the three
 conventional wisdom advanced by black artists and their supporters who feel and
 promote the idea of injustice regarding the music released;
- this research provides transparent information and better-founded reasons about the decision of The Recording Academy and its voting members to award the white artists with the highest award in the music industry, respectively *Album of the Year*;
- black artists and white artists are in need of answers and this report is a meditative resource about the recognition of their contribution in the music industry;
- in this report interested people about music and awards have the space to read about it, and confront their knowledge with the investigation's findings;
- the report can be used to calm the realities of racism and provides a point of reference of the quality, originality and novelty of the music investigated in these pages;
- the report is for future artists waiting to be discovered, and what they need to expect once they are part of the music industry;
- the findings of this report are a challenge for the music industry as well, as it contributes to the wider discussion about creativity, originality and novelty of the artists and who / which artist / song / album should get the higher award;
- by no means this report is made with the intentional purpose to present the artists
 investigated in a negative view; I followed and interpreted raw numbers; this report has
 numbers and interpretation / inference of information, not reviews of the quality of the
 music completed by experts in instruments and lyrics.

This report has three chapters.

In the first chapter, *the music sheet:* methodology, I described the main research methods and the limits of the research.

In the second chapter, *black* and *white* music, I created a comparative study between the following artists: Taylor Swift versus Kanye West, Beyoncé versus Kendrick Lamar, Beyoncé versus Taylor Swift, Kendrick Lamar versus Taylor Swift, Beyoncé versus Adele, Beyoncé versus Beck and Macklemore & Ryan versus Kendrick Lamar; in the *Awards* section I investigated the originality of the songs released by Beyoncé (*Single Ladies (Put a Ring On It), If I were a Boy*) versus Taylor Swift (*You Belong With Me, The Man*).

In chapter three, *What if*, I wrote scenarios based on the information found. These scenarios are hypothetical and negative. After writing this chapter, I decided to delete it; few minutes later, I changed my mind as I remembered that in each scenario there could be one gram of truth; maybe the hypothetical and negative scenarios in this chapter are true or partially true, and could help to create a better understanding of the unfolding events between the following artists: Kanye West, Beyoncé, Jay Z and Taylor Swift.

Finally, in **the end of the journey:** black and white music, I reformulated the aim of this report; I exposed the conclusions I reached for each of the eight points of research, and wrote a response to each conventional wisdom advanced by black artists and their supporters.

Author note.

Thank you for taking the time to read this research paper.

The report is available online in eBook & print edition:

Amazon eBook
Amazon Black and White Paperback Edition
Amazon Black and White Hardcover Edition
Amazon Colour Paperback Edition
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The full experience of *Revi Project 88* is available online:



BLACK AND WHITE MUSIC

IN BLACK & WHITE MUSIC I INVESTIGATED A VERY SMALL PART OF THE MUSIC INDUSTRY FROM THE USA (0.09% MUSICIANS), MORE PRECISELY, I INVESTIGATED THE CONTRIBUTION AND THE ARTISTIC MERIT (GREATER OR LESSER) OF BLACK ARTISTS (0.03%) AND WHITE ARTISTS (0.05%) IN THE PRODUCTION AND WRITING OF THEIR ALBUMS. THE ARTISTS INVESTIGATED IN THIS REPORT ARE TAYLOR SWIFT, KANYE WEST, BEYONCÉ, KENDRICK LAMAR, MACKLEMORE & RYAN, ADELE AND BECK, I SELECTED THESE ARTISTS BECAUSE THE MUSIC PRODUCED AND RELEASED BY THEM WAS USED BY VARIOUS ARTISTS AND JOURNALISTS AS EXAMPLES OF ALLECATIONS OF DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM WHICH TAKES PLACE IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY IN THE USA. THE AIM OF THE RESEARCH IS SPLIT INTO 2 LEVELS. IN THE FIRST LEVEL, I EXPLORED, ANALYSED AND CREATED A COMPARATIVE STUDY ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTION AND THE ARTISTIC MERIT OF BLACK AND WHITE ARTISTS IN THE PRODUCTION AND WRITING OF THEIR ALBUMS, TO ACHIEVE THIS AIM, I ADDED CONTRIBUTION AND ARTISTIC MERIT INTO ONE BUBBLE OF RESEARCH AND TREATED THE TWO CONCEPTS WITH THE SAME MEANING THE SECOND LEVEL: IT IS ABOUT USING THE FINDINGS FROM THE EIGHT POINTS OF RESEARCH. TO OFFER A RESPONSE TO THREE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM ADVANCED BY BLACK ARTISTS AND THEIR RULES AND AWARDS OFFERED BY THE RECORDING ACADEMY. BLACK & WHITE MUSIC MERIT OF SIX OF THE BEST ARTISTS IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY BLACK & WHITE MUSIC REPORT IT IS UNIQUE AND ORIGINAL WHICH INVESTIGATES THE ARTISTIC MERIT OF SIX OF THE BEST ARTISTS IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY BLACK & WHITE MUSIC RELEASED BY FAMOUS ARTISTS THAT WAS NEVER DONE BEFORE. BLACK & WHITE MUSIC RELEASED BY FAMOUS ARTISTS THAT WAS NEVER DONE BEFORE. BLACK & WHITE MUSIC RELEASED BY FAMOUS ARTISTS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS WHO FEEL AND PROMOTE THE IDEA OF INJUSTICE REBARDING THE MUSIC INDUSTRY. ORIGINALITY AND NOVELTY OF THE MUSIC IN VESTIGATED IN THESE PAGES. BLACK & WHITE MUSIC ITS FOR FUTURE ARTISTS WAITING TO BE DISCOVERED, AND WHAT THEY NEED TO EXPECT ONCE THEY ARE PART OF THE MUSIC INDUSTRY.



CASIAN ANTON (BORN 1988) PRIVATE RESEARCHER IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS WITH CONCERNS IN THE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS WITH CONCERNS IN THE STUDY OF AND WORLD STATE. MA PROGRAM IN SECURITY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (2013), BAPROGRAM IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (2013). RELATIONS AND EUROPEAN STUDIES (2011).



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