

Reggae Grammy Safe – Fewer Awards to be Handed out Next Year

The local music fraternity breathed a sigh of relief last week after it was announced that the Grammy Award for Best Reggae Album was not one of the categories being axed by the US-based Recording Academy.

The Academy, the group that hands out the annual Grammy music awards, announced that it will trim the number of its prizes from 109 to 78.

The changes – the first restructuring since the group started handing out awards in 1959 – also includes a switch-up for the voting system.

There will now be single awards in the best Pop, R&B and Country singer categories, and not broken down in male and female groups, the Recording Academy said in a statement.

“After careful and extensive review and analysis of all categories and fields, it was objectively determined that our Grammy categories be restructured to the continued competition and prestige of the highest and only peer-recognised award in music,” said group President and CEO Neil Portnow.

Axed categories include best rap interpretation by a duo or group, some of the pop, rock and country instrumental categories, Zydeco/Cajun music, Polka, Light Classical Music, and Native American music.

Other changes include re-naming the Musical Show category as Musical Theatre; the Film/ Television/Other Visual Media Field as Music For Visual Media; and the Gospel Field as the Gospel/Contemporary Christian Music Field.

“A transformation of the entire Awards structure would ensure that all Fields would be treated with parity,” read the statement.

“It is now expected that each Category shall have at least 40 distinct artist entries, up from 25,” the statement read, adding that no awards will be given if there are less than 25 nominations.

The Best Reggae Album Grammy, which is the sole award in the genre, was first introduced 26 years ago – 1985 – and was then called Best Reggae Recording. That year the group Black Uhuru went home with the award.

Stephen Marley is the record holder for most Reggae Grammy wins with a total of five golden gramophones. His wins includes three times as a member of the band Ziggy Marley and the Melody Makers and twice as a solo act. Other multiple winners are Ziggy Marley with four awards, Bunny Wailer has won three times, and the list of two-time recipients includes Burning Spear, Damian Marley, and Shabba Ranks.

This year, embattled reggae act Buju Banton won the Grammy awards in this category for his project Before the Dawn.