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Children's singer-songwriter Bill Harley says winning again is great

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Seekonk-based children's singer-songwriter Bill Harley won his second Grammy Award yesterday in ceremonies at the Staples Center in Los Angeles.

Harley won in the category of Best Spoken-Word Album for Children for *Yes to Running! Bill Harley Live*, a compilation of songs and stories taken from two shows he did in 2007 in Missoula, Mont., and released on his own Round River Records label.

Reached today at his wife Deb Block-Harley's sister's house in Los Angeles, Harley said that he went to the pre-telecast awards ceremony (where most of the awards, including his, were given out). "We sat in the front row; we just got there early, so it seemed like we were important."

He says winning again "felt great. There is nothing like the first time, but I was still surprised."

Harley won in the same category in 2007 for *Blah Blah Blah: Stories About Clams, Swamp Monsters, Pirates and Dogs*.

There was a lot more competition this year, Harley says; thanks to celebrity nominees in the category such as Gwyneth Paltrow and Tony Shalhoub, Harley believes there were a lot more votes cast in the category this year than usual. "Children's music is much more competitive now. ... And there were a lot of people who voted for me who I don't know. And I guess that happens, but it kind of blows my mind."

As for his speech, Harley "just said thanks" to a lot of people, including Block and the producers at Montana Public Television, whose idea it was to film and make a CD and DVD of the show. "It's a little office, so they were pretty psyched. ... I'm really happy for the people I work with. These are solo projects, but those guys out there kind of went out on a limb to do it."

He went to the big nighttime awards ceremony as well, and was impressed with Paul McCartney's performance of "I Saw Her Standing There" with Dave Grohl, though he was far from the front row for that: "We're not on the floor with the illuminati."

He was most touched, however, by the lifetime-achievement awards given out the night before to Brenda Lee, Four Tops, Tom Paxton and Leo Fender. "All of these people have been doing this their whole lives; that's pretty moving." He and the guys from the group Trout



AP/MATT SAYLES

Bill Harley poses with his award at the Grammy Awards Sunday

Fishing in America introduced themselves to Lee as "your new band" — Lee responded enthusiastically, Harley says.

Winning a Grammy is great for the affirmation, Harley says, but at least in his niche of the music business, it doesn't make a huge nuts-and-bolts difference. "It gives you a little more cache if you're trying to get someone's attention. [The first one] didn't make a difference in terms of income, at least in my category. A spot on Oprah would do that more. ... You get some gigs out of it. But what's going to change for me now? This is my bed."

Still, he added, it's gratifying.

"At a certain point, you have to start paying attention to what people say. ... I tend to be dismissive of anything that affirms my work, but this is the second time."

As for the future, Harley has finished an album for adults that will come out next month, and is finishing up a book for kids, and may do some spoken-word pieces with the Providence String Quartet.

But for the near future, Harley continues to entertain children, and in that world, not much changes. He's fighting a cold and he's won another Grammy, but he'll be performing at the Paul Cuffee School, in Providence, tomorrow.

Harley says that one family of fans e-mailed him with congratulations, and said they told their kindergarten-age daughter, who said, "Doesn't he already have one? What's he need another one for?"

Harley recounts the story with a laugh and adds, "It's a legitimate question."