An “Ocean” came out of Nowhere & Flooded the Streets of Canton
\textit{Texas Southern Band Marches Before 200,000 at Pro Football Hall of Fame Parade}

CANTON, OHIO - During the Grand TimkenSteel Parade, a tradition for the Pro Football Hall of Fame weekend, there were huge inflatable balloons, classic cars, walking units, football legends and bands as far as the eyes could see – then almost an hour into the popular parade that drew more than 200,000 spectators to downtown Canton - an Ocean came out of nowhere. It was the heavily anticipated appearance of the “Ocean of Soul” Marching Band from Texas Southern University. It was as if someone suddenly turned on a Bose Radio with surround sound. The band’s sound was crisp, clear and classic TSU. Moves were smooth and in step – everything about the Ocean was fine-tuned and in step.

The Ocean, as the band is affectionately called, performed at several events for the 2014 Pro Football Hall of Fame enshrinement weekend. The Ocean traveled to Canton to usher in TSU alumnus Michael Strahan’s induction into the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

The TSU Band performances included appearances at the NFL statue unveiling themed, \textit{the Birth of the NFL} which occurred at the birth site of professional football, also at the \textit{Hall of Fame Gold Jacket Dinner} Friday night in the Canton Cultural Center and Civic Center. Millions more watched as the NFL Network carried the event. The Gold Jacket is one of three symbols the Pro Football Hall of Fame Enshrinees received as part of their induction. The ring and the bust are the other two symbols.

Michael Strahan was the final inductee to cross the stage and the crowd went wild as he made his way to the stage. The Texas Southern alumnus was presented by his longtime friend Fox’s Jay Glazer. Strahan’s family watched this historic event with pride and amazement. Stahan was obviously the most sought after inductee as the crowds and camera men

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(Left) NFL Commissioner Roger Godell with TSU’s Eva Pickens

(L to R) TSU’s James Ward & Eva Pickens w/ Canton Mayor Healy, II; and David Baker, Hall of Fame President and Executive Director
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TimkenSteel Grand Hall of Fame parade, on the iconic steps of the Hall of Fame museum, and during the fan tailgating experience. To say that the crowd was excited is an understatement. Everyone from the NFL Commissioner Roger Godell, Hall of Fame President and Executive Director David Baker, Mayor of Canton William Healy II, to the 200,000 in attendance at the parade and statue unveiling were thrilled to hear a band with such a powerful sound. A bevy of ‘thank you for coming’; ‘you guys are awesome’; ‘we’ve got to get you back here next year’,” and ‘we’ve never heard sounds like that’ were bestowed upon the band and the TSU contingency travelling with the band to this historic occasion in the university’s history.

“We think we delivered exactly what organizers ordered – a stellar performance by our student musicians. It was first class and I truly am happy with the band’s performances. It was easy to see that the students gave this performance their all. And it couldn’t get any better than that. They brought it,” said Eva Pickens, TSU’s associate vice president of University Advancement that encompasses Marketing, Communications and Community Relations. “The Ocean delivered on its promise to present a performance that would not be forgotten. People clapped, shouted, danced and strutted their stuff, to the big sounds and tunes of the “Ocean.”

“This band is the biggest thing happening in Canton,” said Victor Strahan, brother of Michael. “We [Strahan family] are so appreciative that y’all made the journey and are here to represent on my brother’s behalf.” There were pockets of alumni, friends and supporters that made the trip to Canton from Houston, Atlanta, New York, Dallas, California, Louisiana and places across the globe to show their support for Michael. Spotted in the crowd were former teammates from both Texas Southern University and the NY Giants.

The University thank Michael Strahan, Kevin Hart, members of the TSU National Alumni Association, its chapters, friends and community for making this trip possible. It was important to make the trip to show our support for Strahan. Additionally this initiative gave the university a chance to showcase its talent, but to talk one on one with officials about TSU’s mission, goals and desire to recruit a diversity of students from across the country. TSU President John Rudley and Canton Mayor William J. Healy, II are already mapping out ways to get students from Canton to Texas Southern University through the Mayor’s already established Scholarship initiative. NFL representatives are talking about inviting the band again. TSU, I’m sure, will gladly accept the invitation.
Canton, Ohio-A sea of football fans, family members and friends made up the more than 4,000 people who gathered for the Pro Football Hall of Fame Gold Jacket Dinner August 1st in the Canton Cultural and Civic Center. Millions more watched as the NFL Network carried the event.

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Stahan was obviously the most sought after inductee as the crowds and camera men surrounded him and his family as they celebrated. Stahan made his family and TSU proud!

This capacity crowd was wined and dined then treated to one of the most spectacular off-the-field sights in pro football. More than one-hundred of the world’s best athletes/Hall of Famers were brought center stage and introduced one by one. NFL greats like Jim Kelly, Evan Hayes, “Mean” Joe Green, Warren Sapp, Warren Moon, Art Shell, Deon Sanders, Lynn Swann, Thurman Thomas, Lawrence Taylor, Bobby Bell, Elvin Bethea, Terry Bradshaw, Marshall Faulk, Mike Ditka, Ken Houston, Franco Harris and many, many more.

As a part of the program, pro football’s elite formed double lines on opposite sides of the stage for the Class of 2014 Inductees to walk through. Each of the seven enshrinees took their walk of welcome into “the club” of Pro Football Hall of Fame...receiving hugs and hand-shakes as they made their emotional journey to center stage to receive their Gold Jacket.

The seven inductees stood center stage as the crowd showed their appreciation with a standing ovation. And when the national television broadcast ended, the celebration continued with cheers, pictures, hugs and tears.
The deadline to submit news or information for TSU E-News is Thursday’s at noon for the following week’s edition. Submissions may be sent to calliskd@tsu.edu or pickensek@tsu.edu. For any questions or comments, call Eva Pickens at 713-313-4205.

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