

# Obituaries

## Al Schmitt 1930–2021

The saying goes that you can take the man out of the country, but you can never take the country out of the man. If you substitute



Al Schmitt for the man and Brooklyn for the country, this adage could safely be applied to recording engineer and producer Al Schmitt. Many Americans from disparate disciplines never let Brooklyn leave their sides and the list includes Nobel prize winners, opera singers, jurists, even gangsters: Barbara Streisand, Ruth Bader Ginsberg, Bugsy Siegal, Beverley Sills, for example,

and Al Schmitt. Though he lived for most of his life and career in Los Angeles, there was always a little Brooklyn lurking in the background, either in his speech or his work ethic.

Beginning his career in New York, Al moved to Los Angeles in 1958 and eventually became a staff engineer for RCA. Known for his engineering with Henry Mancini, Frank Sinatra, Sam Cook, Diana Krall, George Benson, Toto, and many others, he also produced for artists such as Jefferson Airplane, Neil Young, and Jackson Browne. Al managed to win a Grammy in each of the past six decades with a career total of 20 wins and 36 nominations, winning more Grammy Awards than any other engineer or mixer. Al was well-known to members of the Audio Engineering Society and NARAS' Produc-

ers and Engineers Wing, mentoring many of the younger members over the years.

In his book, *The Magic Behind the Music*, Al tells the story of telling Duke Ellington that he felt that he wasn't qualified to engineer the session. Mr. Ellington said "Don't worry, son. The set-up looks fine, and the musicians are there... You're going to do great, and things are going to be just fine." Three songs were cut in three hours. During the remainder of his career, Schmitt recorded and mixed more than 150 Gold and Platinum albums.

**Jim Anderson and Ulrike Schwarz**