

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:
Caroline Glaeser
Culture Shock Music
616-340-2855 or info@etiennecharles.com



PETITE AFRIQUE, CO-PRODUCED BY ETIENNE CHARLES, WINS NAACP IMAGE AWARD

East Lansing, Mich., January 18, 2018 –The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Awards the 49th NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Jazz Album to *Petite Afrique* by the acclaimed vocalist & songwriter Somi, co-produced by Trinidad born trumpeter, composer, and Michigan State University Associate Professor Etienne Charles. Given annually, the NAACP Image Awards celebrates the accomplishments of people of color in the fields of television, music, literature and film, and also honors individuals or groups who promote social justice through creative endeavors.

As an American singer of Rwandan and Ugandan descent, Somi's *Petite Afrique* (Sony Music/OKeh) is a homage to her New York City upper Manhattan neighborhood of Harlem, one of the Meccas of the African diaspora and a vital part of New York City's culture. Populated predominantly by a Francophone, West African, and Muslim community, this strip of Harlem is referred to as "Little Africa" or "Petite Afrique" by the local community. Many of these working-class residents — immigrants-cum-citizens — are now serving as taxi drivers zipping other New Yorkers through the city they've called home since the 1980's.

Charles served as associate producer on *Petite Afrique*, co-writing five songs (the Gentry, Black Enough, Let Me, Midnight Angels and They're like Ghosts), arranging all string and horn parts, in addition to performing as both percussionist and trumpeter. "I first worked with Somi on her album *Lagos Music Salon* on a horn arrangement for a piece titled *Akobi*," said Charles. "She then reached out to me about writing and producing for *Petite Afrique* just following the release of that album. *Petite Afrique* is important because of its depth in the message and I am honored to be a part of this creative team and ecstatic that the album has received this award."

With the albums focus on the African immigrant community of Harlem, Somi wanted the legacy of jazz represented in the music and enlisted Charles. "Etienne has a more straight-ahead approach to jazz but he also really privileges Afro Caribbean heritage and has a deep understanding of the Diasporic expression of ourselves and black people of the world," commented Somi. Charles learned of *Petite Afrique* NAACP success following his sold-out concert "Carnival: the Sound of a People 2.0" which took place at Queen's Hall in Trinidad on the Sunday night of the awards.

Charles has received numerous awards including a 2015 John Simon Guggenheim Fellow in the Creative Arts, a 2016 Jazz at Lincoln Center Millennial Swing Award, and was featured as a panelist and performer at the White House Briefing on Caribbean American Heritage in Washington D.C. In 2012, he was written into the US Congressional Record for his musical contributions to Trinidad and Tobago and the World and was awarded the 2013 Caribbean Heritage Trailblazer Award by the Institute of Caribbean Studies in Washington, DC.

Charles holds a Bachelor's degree from Florida State University and a Master's degree from the Juilliard School. In addition to his professorship at Michigan State University, he has produced seven solo albums and tours with his band Creole Soul.

For more information, visit etiennecharles.com. ###

ETIENNE CHARLES 2018 TOUR DATES

February 2	College Park, MD	MilkBoy Arthouse
March 23 & 24	New York, NY	Appel Room, Jazz at Lincoln Center
April 1	Savannah, GA	Savannah Music Festival
April 4	La Jolla, CA	Auditorium at TSRI
April 5	Albuquerque, NM	African American Arts Center
April 7	Roanoke, VA	Jefferson Center
April 13	Frostburg, MD	Frostburg State University
April 14	Brooklyn, NY	Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts

For more information on Etienne Charles, please visit:

etiennearcharles.com

[Twitter](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Instagram](#)

[YouTube](#)