

People & Places



YG (from left), John Legend, Kirk Franklin, DJ Khaled and Meek Mill point to a screen showing Nipsey Hussle and Kobe Bryant during a tribute at the 62nd annual Grammy Awards on Jan 26 in Los Angeles. (AP)



Cyndi Lauper performs at the 62nd Grammy Awards. (AP)



Brittany Howard (left), and Alicia Keys perform. (AP)



Steven Tyler (from left), Darryl McDaniels, Joe Perry and Joseph Simmons perform 'Walk this Way'. (AP)



Bonnie Raitt performs 'Angel from Montgomery'. (AP)



Ellen DeGeneres introduces a performance. (AP)



Rosalia performs a medley. (AP)



Demi Lovato performs 'Anyone'. (AP)

Diddy calls out Grammys and demands change in fiery speech

Grammy Awards honor LA icons Hussle, Bryant

LOS ANGELES, Jan 27, (AP) — The 2020 Grammy Awards was filled with tributes to Los Angeles icons as the night honored and celebrated the lives and legacies of NBA legend Kobe Bryant and rapper Nipsey Hussle, who won his first pair of Grammys posthumously Sunday.

The Grammys kicked off with a performance in honor of Bryant, who died hours before the awards began. And later in the show Hussle's collaborators and friends, including DJ Khaled, John Legend, Meek Mill, Kirk Franklin, Roddy Ricch and YG, gave an all-star tribute to the man who died last year.

Filmmaker Ava DuVernay introduced the performance, which featured band players, background dancers and Legend wearing traditional Ethiopian and Eritrean clothing in honor of Hussle's African roots. Mill performed a new song called "Letter to Nipsey" while others joined together for "Higher", which is nominated for best rap/sung performance.

"Rest in peace Nipsey Hussle. Rest in peace Kobe Bryant," DJ Khaled said as photos of the entertainers appeared onscreen.

During the pre-ceremony, Hussle's "Racks in the Middle" picked up best rap performance.

The show — taking place in Los Angeles at the Staples Center, Bryant's stomping ground — kicked off with a touching, emotional and an acappella performance of "It's So Hard to Say Goodbye to Yesterday" by host Alicia Keys and Boyz II Men.

"Here we are together on music's biggest night celebrating the artists that do it best, but to be honest with you we are all feeling crazy sadness right now," Keys said as she entered the stage, adding that "Los Angeles, America and the world-wide world lost a hero."

"She said the audience was 'heart-

broken in the house that Kobe Bryant built." "Right now Kobe and his daughter Gianna ... are in our spirits, they're in our hearts, they're in prayers, they're in this building," she added. "Take a moment and hold them inside of you and share our strength and our support with their families."

Before the show officially honored Bryant, Lizzo performed the songs "Truth Hurts" and "Cuz I Love You", saying at the top of the show: "Tonight is for Kobe."

Meanwhile, Sean "Diddy" Combs called out the Grammy Awards for dissing rap and R&B stars in its major categories in a blazing speech that earned him a standing ovation from Beyoncé, Jay-Z and several other music industry players.

Speech

At the end of his 50-minute speech Saturday night at Clive Davis' white-hot pre-Grammys gala, where Combs was honored, the music mogul demanded change and said he was happy to be involved in making a difference.

"So I say this with love to the Grammys, because you really need to know this, every year y'all be killing us man. Man, I'm talking about the pain. I'm speaking for all these artists here, the producers, the executives," he said. "The amount of time it takes to make these records, to pour your heart into it, and you just want an even playing field."

Over the years, the awards show has been criticized when top performing acts like Beyoncé, Kanye West, Eminem, Mariah Carey and others lose in major categories, including album of the year and best new artist. The rap and R&B stars often fall short of their pop, rock and country counterparts.

"In the great words of Erykah Badu, 'We are artists and we are sensitive about our (expletive).' We are passionate. For most of us, this is all we

got. This is our only hope," Combs continued. "Truth be told, hip-hop has never been respected by the Grammys. Black music has never been respected by the Grammys to the point that it should be."

Rap, particularly, has had a long-standing losing streak at the Grammys, which celebrates its 62nd show Sunday. Only two rap-based albums — Lauryn Hill's "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill" and Outkast's "Speakerboxxx/The Love Below" — have won album of the year. Last year's Grammys marked the first time a hip-hop song was awarded song and record of the year when Childish Gambino's "This Is America" achieved the feat. And only four rap acts have been named best new artist, including Hill, Arrested Development, Chance the Rapper and Macklemore & Ryan Lewis.

Questions loomed heavily over the Grammys' voting process this week after the academy's just-ousted CEO, Deborah Dugan, claimed that the awards are rigged and filled with conflicts of interest.

"So right now with this current situation, it's not a revelation. This thing been going on, and it's not just going on in music, it's going on in film, it's going on in sports, it's going around the world," Combs said. "And for years we've allowed institutions that have never had our best interest at heart to judge us. And that stops right now."

The 50-year-old ended with a stern message: "I'm officially starting the clock — y'all got 365 days to get this (expletive) together."

Combs, a three-time Grammy winner, earned the 2020 Grammy Salute to Industry Icons Award on Saturday night. He dedicated the prize to classic albums that didn't win the top Grammy Award: Michael Jackson's "Off the Wall", Prince's "1999", Beyoncé's "Lemonade", Missy Elliott's "Da Real World", and Snoop

Dogg's "Doggystyle", Kanye West's "Graduation" and Nas' "Illmatic".

Tribute

Combs, the founder of Bad Boy Records, received an all-star tribute from artists he's worked with, including Lil Kim, Mase, Faith Evans and Carl Thomas. The performance transformed the Beverly Hilton Hotel into a hip-hop jam session, with some people even dancing on top of chairs, including Usher, Wiz Khalifa and Combs himself.

Davis' annual gala, a not-so-easy event to get invited to, was jam-packed with well-known guests from a range of fields, including Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, Michael Douglas, Naomi Campbell, Cardi B, Berry Gordy, Herbie Hancock, Quincy Jones, Joni Mitchell, DJ Khaled, Smokey Robinson, Ozzy and Sharon Osbourne, Trevor Noah, Billy Porter and Wolfgang Puck.

Beck kicked off the multi-hour event with an energetic performance; others who hit the stage included Carlos Santana, Chance the Rapper, John Legend, Khalid and Cynthia Erivo, who sang Janet Jackson songs in tribute to the performer.

Jackson, who didn't receive an award but was honored for her musical achievements, said she's happy to still have a career in music.

"When I was getting dress this evening I thought about it and I said to myself, 'I've been in this industry for 47 years,'" the 53-year-old said. "That's a long time but I still enjoy going to work and I feel very blessed my journey ahead of me."

Though Cyndi Lauper wasn't honored Saturday, she also owned the show with an explosive performance of her classic hit song, "Girls Just Want to Have Fun", alongside singer-songwriter Brandi Carlile. She took off her shoes, leaving the stage to sit on top of a table where Jamie Foxx, Usher and others were sitting.



Camila Cabello performs 'First Man'. (AP)



Lizzo plays the flute during her performance. (AP)



Common performs at the Grammy Awards. (AP)



Above left: John Legend performs during a tribute in honor of the late Nipsey Hussle. (Above): Lil Nas X performs at the Grammy Awards. (AP)

From extreme left: Ben Platt performs; H.E.R. performs 'Sometimes'; and YG (left), and DJ Khaled perform during a tribute in honor of the late Nipsey Hussle at the 62nd annual Grammy Awards. (AP)