

## People &amp; Places

## Music

## Expresses himself in song

## Freed from tough past, Anuel wants to inspire

NEW YORK, Dec 14, (AP): **Anuel AA** says he finally felt free to express himself uncensored on his new album since he'd recently finished probation in an illegal weapons possession case for which he also spent 10 months in jail.

"At last I felt the freedom to be able to express whatever I wanted in a song," the Puerto Rican trap and reggaeton musician said in a recent interview with The Associated Press.

Released on his 29th birthday on Nov. 26, "Las Leyendas Nunca Mueren" (Legends Never Die) this week topped Billboard's "Top Latin Albums" and "Latin Rhythm Albums" charts and 10 of its

15 songs appeared on the "Hot Latin Songs" one. The first single, "Dictadura," has been a hit in countries including the United States, Colombia, Spain, Argentina and Mexico, and its music video has more than 54 million views on YouTube.

It is Anuel AA's third solo studio album, after "Real Hasta la Muerte" (2018) and "Emmanuel" (2020), and it

pays tribute to idols who inspired him throughout his life, especially basketball stars like Michael Jordan and Kobe Bryant. (The singer also released the album "Los Dioses" with Ozuna earlier this year)

The art for this project — including five album covers and several videos — was done with basketball as the concept. Anuel AA is also co-owner of the Capitanes de Arecibo, a team that last month became champion of Puerto Rico's professional league, the Baloncesto Superior Nacional.

From his home in Miami, where he's lived since he was released from jail three years ago, the artist spoke on a video call about his music, his creative process and his desire to inspire. Answers have been edited for brevity and clarity.

**AP:** The album opens with "Real Hasta la Muerte," an almost 10-minute-long intro with tough lyrics about violence in the barrio.

**Anuel AA:** You know that I was known for my trap music, which was wilder, with a lot of adrenaline, more from the street, talking about my past experiences. I wanted to make that kind of music for a long time, but since I was on probation I didn't feel free, I had to watch my lyrics because even if it's music, it could be misinterpreted. Now I finally felt the freedom to be able to express whatever I wanted in a song. My biggest fans are from the streets and I wanted them to feel on another level from the beginning of the album, bring them into my world. It's one of my favorite songs on the album.

**AP:** Can you tell us a bit what was it like for you to be on probation?

**Anuel AA:** It's like being half free and half in their hands, the feds, because they have you under surveillance. Those three years I was reporting to them, taking drug tests, which of course I was always clean and well, I never had problems. But it is something that even — I could not leave my country unless I showed the wire transfers that were sent for payments, all my contracts; every month I had to send all the information from my bank account. Psychologically, you don't feel free; it becomes stressful. Although you are not doing anything, you can be relaxed at and get nervous when the phone rings. Thank God that chapter in my life is over, and well, I learned a lot from that process. It made me stronger and bigger.

**AP:** Did it inspire you to write these songs?

**Anuel AA:** It inspired me a lot. I feel that it was an important part of the process. I mean, to be able to mature as I have matured up to now and to value my work and so many blessings.

**AP:** In the song "1942," you sing "money and power demonized me." Do you feel that way sometimes?

**Anuel AA:** You hear that song and it's like a confession, like when you have that moment of intimacy with your partner. The song is about a person who is mentally ill, is drinking. It's called "1942" like the (Don Julio) tequila, like I'm talking to her while we're drinking together and that's why I say things that are very common but also very strange, crazy things. In real life, if I think about my whole life, about everything I have lived through, it has happened to me. That's why it sounds so natural. And there is so much feeling, but at the same time there is also madness because the day I recorded it I was drinking. I said: "If I'm going to do a song that deals with 1942 Tequila, then I'm going to drink to feel the same vibe of the song." (Laughs)

**AP:** I see you are wearing a Michael Jordan T-shirt and all the album art revolves around basketball. How did the idea for this concept come about?

**Anuel AA:** Before I became a singer, my first dream was to be a basketball player. I focused on Kobe and Jordan because they are two of the legends that have inspired me the most, because they are legends who fell 10 times, but got up a million times. My passion for basketball kind of mixed with my music career. I feel that this is the first step on a very long road to be a legend. I want others to be inspired by me as I was inspired by them.

## Also:

**LOS ANGELES:** A host of musical artists will join an online concert on Wednesday, Dec. 15 to benefit environmental causes. The Lumineers, Jack Johnson, Black Pumas, Rhiannon Giddens and Ben Harper will appear on the "Peace Through Music" event run by Playing for Change and the United Nations Population Fund, on Playing for Change's YouTube channel. Designed to promote environmental sustainability, the concert will raise money for organizations like Conservation International, American Rivers and the World Wildlife Fund. It is modeled after a similar 2020 concert that raised money for social justice causes.



This image released by Amazon shows William Shatner aboard Blue Origin's New Shepard rocket after launching near Van Horn, Texas, on Oct. 13, 2021. A one-hour special 'Shatner in Space' will stream Wednesday on Amazon Prime Video. (AP)



This photo provided by Time magazine shows Elon Musk on the cover of the magazine's Dec. 27 - Jan 3 double issue announcing Musk as their 2021 'Person of the Year.' (AP)

## Variety

**HOUSTON:** Rapper **Travis Scott** said in an interview that he didn't know that fans had died at his Astroworld festival in Houston until after his performance.

In a lengthy interview with TV and radio personality **Charlamagne** posted on YouTube, Scott described from his perspective what happened at the Nov 5 festival that left 10 people dead.

"It wasn't really until minutes before the press conference until I figured out exactly what happened. Even after the show, you're just kind of hearing things, but I didn't know the exact details until minutes before the press conference," Scott said.

He said he paused the performance a couple of times, but he couldn't hear fans screaming for help.

"I stopped like a couple of times just to make sure everybody was OK," said Scott. "I just really go off the fans energy as a collective, you know? Call and response. I just didn't, I just didn't hear that."

Scott was the headliner and creator of the Astroworld festival, where 50,000 people were in the audience. Scott's set turned deadly as fans surged toward the stage. The youngest victim was 9-year-old **Ezra Blount**. The others who died ranged in age from 14 to 27. Some 300 people were injured and treated at the festival site and 25 were taken to hospitals.

More than 300 lawsuits have been filed so far in Houston and will be consolidated and handled by one judge. Scott, concert promoter Live Nation and other companies associated with the event are among those being sued. Additionally, Scott and the event organizers are the focus of a criminal investigation by Houston police. No one has been charged, and no timetable has been set for when the investigation would be completed.

"Travis Scott, his entourage, handlers, promoters, managers, hangers on and everyone else who enable him are the problem," said **Tony Buzbee**, an attorney representing the family of 21-year-old **Axel Acosta Avila** who died, in a statement provided to the AP. "Everything that Travis Scott has done or said since ten people died and hundreds of others were injured at his concert has been lawyer driven and calculated to shift blame from him to someone else." (AP)

**OAKLAND, Calif:** Authorities say a television news crew was robbed at gunpoint while working on Saturday.

Oakland police spokesperson **Kim Armstead** said an NBC sports news crew was robbed while working near **Jack London Square**, the East Bay Times reported.

Armstead said three armed individuals took a camera from inside the crew's vehicle. No injuries were reported.

It's the third incident targeting news organizations in the Bay Area city in recent weeks. A San Francisco Chronicle photographer was robbed at gunpoint this month in West Oakland and last month a security guard was fatally shot during an attempted robbery while he was with a KRON-TV news crew. (AP)

**AURORA, Colo:** For at least two days and

## Media

## Explores 'growing friendship' between Shatner &amp; Bezos

## 'Shatner in Space' marvels at 'finite' Earth

LOS ANGELES, Dec 14, (AP): William Shatner's durable role as an avatar of space's promise drew a frenzy of attention when fiction became fact with his rocket ride.

The "Star Trek" actor says he was as surprised by it as he was gratified by the 10-minute, suborbital jaunt made possible by billionaire Jeff Bezos. The experience is the subject of "Shatner in Space," a hour-long special out Wednesday on Amazon Prime Video.

It details last October's flight that made Shatner, 90, the oldest person to reach space and explores what the streaming service called the "growing friendship" between Shatner and Bezos. The Amazon empire founder credits "Star Trek" with igniting his interest in space travel.

Shatner, whose decades-long career includes "The Defenders," "T.J. Hooker" and "Boston Legal" along with the original "Star Trek" series and films, wanted to be part of Bezos' Blue Origin launch last July, its first with passengers. Shatner saw joining trip No. 2 akin to being named vice president when the Oval Office was the dream.

He discussed his change of heart and the flight's impact in an Associated Press interview, shifting between philosopher and blunt storyteller who, at one point, invoked 1937's Hindenburg blimp explosion. Remarks were edited for length and clarity.

**AP:** The zest for adventure can ebb with the years, but it hasn't with you. How do you explain it?

**Shatner:** Well, I've been doing a lot of foolish things, according to my wife, in the last many years. I'm probably an adrenaline junkie. A couple of years ago I drove a motorcycle across the country, and I recently went down 60 feet underwater and visited with four tiger sharks. I'm no stranger to thinking, "Oh, geez, I can die here." But I didn't feel the necessity of going up into space. Why do I want to put myself in that position? It's uncomfortable. I've got, my wife calls them "velvet sheets," I can just snuggle in. Then I thought a little further about it, the idea of weightlessness and going into space and just the feeling, and (decided) "I'll do it." When it caught people's imagination I was absolutely shocked. I was as shocked about that as I was about the flight itself.

**AP:** But you're Capt. Kirk.

**Shatner:** I know. But that's 55 years ago. There have been other things since then. The acquisition of knowledge was shocking, its popularity was shocking. Everything about it was extraordinary.

**AP:** Before the flight, you gave interviews in which you fretted about the dangers of the flight. Was that joking or jitters?

**Shatner:** Weren't you brought up on the Hindenburg burning? It's burn-

ing hydrogen. That's what they're putting in the (rocket) tank.

**AP:** You had an emotional conversation with Jeff Bezos immediately after the flight. What touched you so deeply?

**Shatner:** I immersed myself in the last 50 years in the connectivity of the Earth and how connected everything is. Everything is beautiful on Earth, and we have destroyed millions of (living) things. And then I saw the Earth giving life and I felt such sadness. I saw how finite the Earth is. And you and me are little dots, not as large as ants. We are insignificant on this insignificant planet. And yet we are aware, we are observers of that insignificance. And that's significant.

**AP:** "Star Trek" depicted advanced human behavior that we've yet to achieve. How do you see the world politically, environmentally?

**Shatner:** Human beings resist change, probably part of our indigenous makeup. But change is happening so quickly, and more quickly than we imagined. The tipping points of these changes have happened in the last 50 years, and it takes longer than

## Time magazine names Elon Musk as its 'Person of the Year' for 2021

NEW YORK, Dec 14, (AP): Calling him a "clown, genius, edgelord, visionary, industrialist, showman," Time magazine has named Tesla CEO Elon Musk as its Person of the Year for 2021.

Musk, who is also the founder and CEO space exploration company SpaceX, recently passed Amazon founder Jeff Bezos as the world's wealthiest person as the rising price of Tesla pushed his net worth to around \$300 billion. He owns about 17% of Tesla's stock, which sold for almost \$1,000 each on Monday.

Time cited the breadth of Musk's endeavors, from his founding of SpaceX in 2002, to his hand in the creation of the alternative energy company SolarCity in addition to Tesla, the most valuable car company in the world. The magazine emphasizes that its annual acknowledgement is not an award, but rather, "recognition of the person who had the most influence on the events of the year, for good or for ill."

The magazine also noted the sway Musk holds over an army of loyal followers (and investors) on social media, where he skewers the powerful and also regulators attempting to keep in check an executive that is far from tradi-

tional. Before his 66 million followers on Twitter, he offers outlandish assistance to the world and drives even his own followers and investors mad by rolling markets.

Though it only became profitable in recent years, Tesla is far and away the world's most valuable car company, at one point this year crossing the \$1 trillion market capitalization threshold. Detroit heavyweights Ford and General Motors are worth less than \$200 billion combined.

Musk said last month that SpaceX will attempt to launch its futuristic, bullet-shaped Starship to orbit in January. NASA has contracted with SpaceX to use Starship for delivering astronauts to the lunar surface as early as 2025. Musk said he plans to use the reusable ships to eventually land people on Mars.

Time highlighted Musk's recent admission to his 66 million Twitter followers that half his tweets were "made on a porcelain throne." In its profile of the provocative CEO, Time went on to chronicle one of those toilet tweet storms in detail before concluding: "This is the man who aspires to save our planet and get us a new one to inhabit."

**AP:** Are you optimistic about the future?

**Shatner:** I interviewed Bezos several times while shooting this documentary, and I'm hopeful that some of that will be in there. The last line he told me, which is what reverberates in my head, is, "You have to hope. Without hope, what is there?" So he's busy trying to get industry up into space, up into geocentric orbit, which we have the technology to do.

**AP:** Many decades have passed since "Star Trek," but people still see Capt. Kirk as part of your public persona. Is that something you wish for or not?

**Shatner:** Somebody once said, "You get the career you deserve." And to change those words, you get the life you deserve. You made a decision based on what you knew at the time. You liked the guy, you didn't like the guy; you wanted to live in the city. Whatever the instances were that you turned left instead of right. You can't regret having made a decision because it was based on your need, whatever it was.

down and it'll come down eventually," said Aurora resident **Jessica Meadows** on Friday morning, when the city received its first snow of the season. "That's not going to happen."

Meadows said she and other neighbors called Aurora animal control and Xcel Energy for help. "Everyone says they can't do anything," Meadows said.

Standard practice, according to another utility is to give cats time to make their way back down on their own, Sentinel Colorado reported. (AP)



Scott



Avila