

New York City ushers in 2022 with ball drop in Times Square

NEW YORK, Jan. 2, (AP) — New York City welcomed the new year — and bid good riddance to 2021 — as confetti and cheers spread across Times Square as a New Year's Eve tradition returned to a city beleaguered by a global pandemic.

The new year marched across the globe, time zone by time zone, and thousands of New Year's revelers stood shoulder to shoulder in a slight chill to witness a 6-ton ball, encrusted with nearly 2,700 Waterford crystals, descend above a crowd of about 15,000 in-person spectators — far fewer than the many tens of thousands of revelers who usually descend on the world-famous square to bask in the lights and hoopla of the nation's marquee New Year's Eve event.

It did so as an uneasy nation tried to muster optimism that the worst days of the pandemic are now behind it — even as public health officials cautioned Friday against unbridled celebrations amid surging COVID-19 infections from the omicron variant.

Last year's ball drop was closed to the public because of the pandemic. As the ball dropped and euphoria filled the streets, Maya Scharm, a dog trainer visiting from New Jersey, felt 2021 slide away.

"It's symbolic of getting back to normal," she said, just minutes after the stroke of midnight.

"Hopefully it's different this year," said her companion, Brandon Allen. "We already have that sense of stability. We know what's going on — there's a new strain going around now — but it's like we've kind of been through it for two years at this point."

Though the crowds were smaller, the throngs nevertheless stretched for blocks to soak in the celebration, with many traveling from afar to take part. Confetti lit up by electronic billboards swirled in a light wind on a mild winter night in New York City.

Mary Gonzalez stood a few feet behind a crowd, wanting to keep her distance from anyone unwittingly carrying the virus.

"I'm happy that 2021 is over because it caused a lot of problems for everybody," said Gonzalez, who was visiting from Mexico City and wanted to take in an American tradition. "We hope that 2022 is much better than this year."

The annual ball drop took place as the clock ticked into midnight and ushered in the new year, an occasion usually commemorated with the uncorking of Champagne, clinking of pints, joyous embraces and renewed hope for better times ahead.

Resiliency

Times Square is often referred to as the crossroads of the world, and city officials insisted on holding the marquee New Year's Eve event to demonstrate the city's resiliency even amid a resurgence of the coronavirus.

But 2022 begins just as the year prior began — with the pandemic clouding an already uncertain future.

Doubts swirled about whether the city would have to cancel this year's bash, as the city posted record numbers of COVID-19 cases in the days leading to it, even as some cities like Atlanta had decided to cancel their own celebrations.

COVID-19 cases in the U.S. have soared to their highest levels on record at over 265,000 per day on average. New York City reported a record number of new, confirmed cases — nearly 44,000 — on Wednesday and a similar number Thursday, according to New York state figures.

Officials required those attending the spectacle would have to wear

masks and show proof of vaccination. Organizers had initially hoped that more than 50,000 revelers would be able to join in, but plans were dramatically scaled back because of widespread infections.

Rap artist and actor LL Cool J was supposed to be among the performers taking the stage in Times Square on Friday night, but announced he would pull out of the event because he had tested positive for COVID-19.

But Mayor Bill de Blasio, who relinquished oversight of the nation's most populous city at the stroke of midnight, said the festivities at Times Square would "show the world that New York City is fighting our way through this."

New York City's incoming mayor, Eric Adams, took his oath in Times Square soon after the ball drop. He made a brief appearance earlier on the main stage to affirm the city's resiliency.

"It's just great when New York shows the entire country how we come back," he said. "We showed the entire globe what we're made of. We're unbelievable. This is an unbelievable city and, trust me, we're ready for a major comeback because this is New York."

That hopeful sentiment was shared by ordinary people.

"I look back and I see it as a sort of a stressful year, but it wasn't a terrible year," said Lynn Cafarchio, who braved the crowds to attend the festivities with her husband Pete.

A New York City tour guide, she was unemployed for a spell as the economy was shuttered and tourism tanked.

"We're standing here glad that 2021 will soon be over," she said, "but really positive about next year."

Even if the crowds were considerably smaller, people gathered across block after block to witness the ball drop.

New Year

Variety



KT Tunstall performs at the Times Square New Year's Eve celebration on Friday, Dec. 31, 2021, in New York. (AP)

Television

NBC drama ... 'a dream on every single level'

Moore braces for farewell to 'This Is Us'

By Lynn Elber

If Mandy Moore is bracing for emotional whiplash, it's understandable.

She and her musician-husband, Taylor Goldsmith, welcomed their first child in February, an event she says that turned her world "Technicolor," and the pair collaborated on an upcoming second album.

The cloud ahead: The end of "This Is Us," the NBC drama that she says proved a "dream on every single level," from her co-stars to the consistently challenging work. The 18-episode final season, beginning Tuesday on NBC, will include an episode directed by Moore.

"It's going to be so horrific to say goodbye in a couple of months" when taping wraps, said Moore. "I haven't really wrapped my brain around it yet." She plays matriarch Rebecca Pearson in the decade-shifting family drama created and produced by Dan Fogelman — who she says has steadfastly resisted pleas to keep it going.

Moore won't have much of a lull after taping concludes. Next summer, the singer-songwriter and Goldsmith plan to tour in support of their follow-up album to 2020's "Silver Landings," with son August in tow. Moore calls him "the best thing in my life" and a look-a-like for his Dawes band frontman dad, including the dimple they share ("little butt chin," as Moore cheerfully labels it on the baby, nicknamed Gus).

In an interview with The Associated Press, Moore talked about motherhood and what she sees ahead for her career, which already counts teen pop stardom, movies ("A Walk to Remember," "Saved!") and a lead actress Emmy nomination for "This Is Us." Remarks have been edited for clarity and length.

AP: As a new parent, how would you describe your life now?

Moore: It's all of the clichés, life in Technicolor. It's a boundless love that you never could have imagined. It's exhausting and exhilarating and everything in between. On a professional level, I approach my job with an entirely new heart. I want to go back to the beginning of this show now, because I have some idea of what it's like to be a mother and what a mother's love is and what it makes you do, and the crazy choices that you never could have imagined yourself making before becoming a parent.

AP: Your comment about wanting to revisit "This Is Us" with your new perspective brings to mind how protective Rebecca was when her son Randall's birth father tried to enter his life.

Moore: That's exactly what I was thinking about. That was a choice that I really was at odds with Rebecca about early on. It was really challenging to see how she possibly could have made that decision. And now being a mom, that was her baby. The idea that anybody could potentially harm your child emotionally or could potentially physically remove your child, all of that is unfathomable. So I definitely have a lot more compassion and empathy for the choice that she made.

AP: Dan Fogelman's thrown challenges at you every season, building to Rebecca's dementia. Can you recall your reaction when you learned what she'd face?

Moore: It was initially shocking, but also heart-breaking. This poor woman, at every juncture of her life, has had challenge after challenge. It really just says so much about who she is and what she brings to the table that with each challenge, she meets it with grace. I was also terrified, as I was when Dan initially told me, "Hey, we have this idea where you're playing this character present day as we will be jumping around in time." I think I had that same initial, "Whoa, can I do

that?" when thinking about (playing) this woman with this very real diagnosis that millions of people across the country and the world deal with with loved ones. I wanted to make sure that I was doing my due diligence and approaching this chapter of her life thoughtfully, because I know what a platform the show has to really have an important dialogue around Alzheimer's and dementia and diagnosis.

AP: Early in your acting career, you played several unlikeable, snooty characters, and expressed concern at one point about being typecast. Now you're playing a beloved mom, so it looks like you weren't.

Moore: I was not typecast. In fact, I'd love to get back to playing the villain a little bit more, especially after six years of playing arguably television's best mom. I think for a while I kept coming up against being typecast in these sort of lovely romantic comedies and whatnot. And that is definitely a certain side of who I am. But it took Dan, and it takes for any of us, I guess, as actors or creatives, just one person to see something in you and to give you an opportunity that opens an entirely new world. And that is what Dan Fogelman did for me with Rebecca.

AP: What's ahead for you on the music front?

Moore: This past July, we went back into the studio, the same group of musicians (on "Silver Landings"). And the plan is to pick up in June and July of 2022 and go on the road the way that we had intended a week before the world shut down because of COVID. I feel like we'll have this fully realized tour of music from "Silver Landings" and music from my next record. That'll be out probably right around the same time as we tour next year, and we'll be able to bring Gus with us. So we'll have a bus with mom and dad and Gus and play music every night. It's the dream. It's going to be a fun year in 2022. (AP)

Features

ARABIC TIMES

MONDAY, JANUARY 3, 2022

LOS ANGELES: Rapper Kodak Black was arrested on a trespassing charge Saturday in South Florida, authorities said.

The Broward Sheriff's Office said Black was taken into custody in his hometown of Pompano Beach early Saturday morning, according to the South Florida SunSentinel. Investigators did not immediately release details about what prompted the arrest.

Black, whose legal name is Bill Kapri, later posted bond and was released, the newspaper reported. Neither his publicist nor his attorney immediately returned an emailed request for comment.

Black had a three-year federal prison sentence for falsifying documents used to buy weapons at a Miami gun store commuted by President Donald Trump on his last day in office in 2020. He had served about half his sentence.

He was later sentenced to probation last April for assaulting a teenage girl in a South Carolina hotel room. Black was originally charged with rape, but accepted a deal and pleaded guilty to first-degree assault.

Black has sold over 30 million singles and has had several multi-platinum and platinum-certified singles, including "Zeze," "No Flockin'" and "Roll in Peace."

He gained initial recognition with his single "No Flockin'", released in 2014. His debut album, Painting Pictures (2017), peaked at number 3 on the US Billboard 200 and included the Billboard Hot 100 top ten single "Tunnel Vision". Black's second album, Dying to Live (2018), peaked at number one on the Billboard 200 and was supported by the single "Zeze" (featuring Travis Scott and Offset), which peaked at number 2 on the Hot 100. On Feb. 6, 2021, Kodak returned to social media with a new hairstyle and a slimmer figure. The same day, he posted a video to Twitter where he and his lawyer Bradford Cohen said that they had informed the FBI in Miami that Kodak would cover tuition costs for the two children of late FBI agent Laura Schwartzberger and the child of late FBI agent Daniel Alfin, both of whom died on duty. (Agencies)

WASHINGTON: "Winnie the Pooh" and "The Sun Also Rises" are going public.

A.A. Milne's beloved children's book and Ernest Hemingway's classic novel, along with films starring Buster Keaton and Greta Garbo are among the works from 1926 whose copyrights expired Saturday, putting them in the public domain as the

calendar flips to 2022.

Poetry collections "The Weary Blues" by Langston Hughes and "Enough Rope" by Dorothy Parker will also turn 95 and enter the public domain under US law. The silent films "Battling Butler" starring and directed by Buster Keaton, "The Temptress" starring Greta Garbo, "The Son of



Black



Trump

the Sheik" starring Rudolph Valentino, and "For . . . Sake" starring Harold Lloyd are also becoming public property.

And under 2018 legislation by Congress, sound recordings from the earliest area of electronic audio will become available.

Copyright experts at Duke University estimate that some 400,000

sound recordings from before 1923 will become available for public use, including music from Ethel Waters, Mammie Smith, Enrico Caruso and Fanny Brice.

Once a work enters the public domain it can legally be shared, performed, reused, repurposed or sampled without permission or cost. (AP)