

Griping 'n' groaning: It's time for GRAMMYS

■ Despite a few decent nominations, the GRAMMYS continue to reflect a degrading music industry

By Rebecca Wilson
Oregon Daily Emerald

On Feb. 21, millions of viewers in 15 countries will plop down in their living rooms for an evening of bitching and moaning over the results of the 43rd Annual GRAMMY Awards. Oh sure, there will undoubtedly be a few geeks/music professors/Midwestern farmers who are really interested in the category for Best New Age Album or Best Traditional Polka Album. They are in the minority, however. The rest of us will watch to complain.

I haven't watched the GRAMMY Awards for several years because I have grown disenchanted with a music industry that values Floridian heartthrobs and anorexic little girls over grownups who can write their own songs and play their own instruments. I started questioning the value of a "prestigious" award that seemed to reflect album sales rather than

critical acclaim and musical integrity. The GRAMMYS perpetuate an industry that consistently recognizes the lowest common denominator of musicians instead of supporting the innovative craftsmen who challenge their listeners.

Rant aside, I decided to seriously peruse this year's nominations, which were released on Jan. 3. My efforts paid off when I encountered several surprises amid the ranks of 'N Sync and Destiny's Child. The nominations included albums released between Oct. 1, 1999, and Sept. 30, 2000, and songs that were released or became popular within that same time period.

1. Album of the Year. Latin beats and hyper teens? Nope. The white men dominate the category for this year: Beck, Eminem, Radiohead, Steely Dan and Paul Simon comprise the eclectic mix. Love him or hate him, Eminem will probably win this coveted category with his "Marshall Mathers LP." Just remember, good rappers aren't necessarily good people. It's nice to see that Radiohead didn't make as many enemies as expected with their spaced-out, college-rock album "Kid A," and I

love the fact that Paul Simon continues to turn out great tunes. As for Steely Dan ... I'm not sure what "Two Against Nature" is doing here, but good for them. However, my personal favorite for Album of the Year is Beck's "Midnite Vultures," which was probably the most sexed-out album of 1999. Conspicuous by his absence in this category is D'Angelo with "Voodoo."

COMMENTARY

Rebecca Wilson

2. Boy bands. The Backstreet Boys really are on the way out. They received just a single nomination for "Show Me the Meaning of Being Lonely" in the category of Best Pop Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocals. Evidently, their hard-core persona hasn't endeared them to critics any more than it has to the teeny-bopper crowd. On the other hand, 'N Sync, with three nominations, is here to stay. But at least they feel content with their pretty-boy image and don't suffer delusions of being ghetto super-

stars.

3. Old people. Maybe I'm betraying my generation, but seeing aging rockers rubbing shoulders with the youngsters renews my faith in the Recording Academy and music consumers in general. In the category of Female Pop, Joni Mitchell and Madonna hold their own against the likes of Christina Aguilera and Britney Spears. Paul McCartney actually holds a nomination in the Alternative Music category with his album "Liverpool Sound Collage." Other veterans showing their faces are Don Henley, Patti Smith, Bob Dylan, Melissa Etheridge, U2, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Aimee Mann and The Cure. In a society that seems to value physical appearance and youth above all else, it's refreshing that people older than 40 can still make the Top 40.

But even with all these interesting and well-deserved nominations, most people will feel disappointed with most of the awards that will be handed out next month at the Staples Center in Los Angeles. Even if your favorite band wins a GRAMMY, a band you despise will undoubtedly win one as well. After all,

Oregon and the GRAMMY Awards

Helmuth Rilling and the Oregon Bach Festival Chorus and Orchestra have been nominated for a GRAMMY in the field of Best Choral Performance for the world premiere recording of Krzysztof Penderecki's Credo. The album has already received the AFIM Indie award for best classical orchestral recording on an independent label, and the Cannes Classical Award as best album of music by a living composer.

Soloists on the album include University faculty member Milagro Vargas.

Rilling also received a nomination in the category of Choral Performance for his recording of the Bach Christmas Oratorio with the Gächinger Kantorei and the Bach Collegium Stuttgart.

history shows that high record sales really do dictate the results of the award ceremony. So sit back, relax and be prepared for a good old-fashioned gripe session when 'N Sync brings home the booty.

Entertainment briefs

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — "The Sopranos" star James Gandolfini received a \$5 million offer he couldn't refuse to appear in the new

prison film "The Castle."

The tough-guy actor has signed with DreamWorks SKG to play the warden of a military prison in the drama, his manager, Mark Armstrong, said Monday.

Gandolfini's character will fight for control of the prison against an

inmate who was once his five-star general.

Robert Redford has signed to play the general, and former film critic Rod Lurie will direct.

After playing meaty side-character roles for much of his career, Gandolfini's fame has skyrocketed with his Emmy-winning role as Tony Soprano, the leader of a dysfunctional mob family, on the HBO crime series.

Shooting on "The Castle" is scheduled to begin in March after Gandolfini finishes his third season of "The Sopranos."

PASADENA, Calif. — The annual vigil has begun for fans of "The X-Files." Will the series return for a ninth season?

Call the forecast partly sunny. "It's the same as it's always been," creator Chris Carter told TV critics over the weekend. "If we can find a reason to keep doing the show creatively, we'll keep doing it."

Later, he said there are "great plans" for a ninth season, "but we're not quite there yet."

It's been a transitional year for the Fox series. Actor Robert Patrick joined the cast and gave the show some new creative juice, Carter said. David Duchovny has become a part-timer; he'll return for several episodes starting Feb. 25.

Carter also is working on "The Lone Gunmen," a comedy spinoff of "The X-Files" that's expected to get a tryout from Fox in March.

NEW YORK — Even though he's had two failed marriages, Michael Jackson believes he can offer a word or two about balancing love and family.

The King of Pop will host a celebrity panel about balancing "romantic love, familial love and professional dedication" at a benefit for his charity, Heal the Kids, on Valentine's Day. Tickets will sell for \$45-\$65.

Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, author of the book "Kosher Sex" and a friend of Jackson's, will moderate the Feb. 14 event at Carnegie Hall. Other participants include Johnnie Cochran, Chuck Woolery and Dr. Drew Pinsky, Jackson's publicist said Monday.

Jackson, 42, is the chairman and Boteach is the president of Heal

the Kids, which aims to make children a greater priority in adults' lives. Jackson has two young children of his own by Deborah Rowe, who filed for divorce in 1999. He was also married to Lisa Marie Presley.

Jackson was accused of child molestation in 1993, but charges were never filed and he reached an out-of-court settlement with his accuser.

He is working on a new album, expected to be released this year. He also will take part in a Jackson Five reunion album with his brothers, according to his publicist, Cheri Fein.

"Michael will be recording two to three songs for the new Jackson Five album," she said Monday. "He has not gone into the studio yet to do this, and he has not yet committed to touring."

WEST HOLLYWOOD, Calif. — Erika Christensen says she didn't draw from her own life for the gripping drug-war drama "Traffic." "Honestly, I hadn't had a cigarette when I got the role," she told reporters recently.

Christensen was 17 when the R-rated movie was shot. Her parents were at her side on the set at various times.

In "Traffic," she plays the 16-year-old daughter of Michael Douglas' character, an Ohio Supreme Court justice who is appointed America's drug czar. He doesn't realize his daughter has a serious habit of her own.

Christensen prepared for the role by visiting a rehabilitation center and talking to people being treated there.

She said there's one thing her character should have known: "How hard is it to figure out that if you do crack and heroin, your life is not going to go very well?"

PASADENA, Calif. — What do you do if you're a 17-year-old boy, lie about your age to get on "The Dating Game" and win a trip to Acapulco with a 25-year-old woman?

Not much, apparently. The potential dream experience turned into a nightmare for Judd Apatow, who grew up to be a Hollywood producer and writer of "The Larry Sanders Show" and "Freaks and Geeks." He's explor-

ing awkward adolescence again in a new Fox comedy about college freshmen, "Undeclared."

As for his own awkward adolescence, Apatow skipped school to take his winning trip — and learned a few lessons from his date.

"Every bus boy in the place hit on her in a way that I had never seen at the time," Apatow recalled.

He wound up with a bad case of sunburn that left him confined to his room for two days.

LOS ANGELES — The son of the late Abbie Hoffman has settled a lawsuit that claimed he was portrayed as "wimpy" in the film "Steal This Movie!"

America Hoffman dropped his lawsuit against Lions Gate Films, Abbie! Productions and producer-director Robert Greenwald. In a statement released Monday, Hoffman and the defendants announced they have "amicably" resolved the dispute.

Terms and conditions of the settlement were not disclosed.

The suit alleged invasion of privacy and use of America Hoffman's name and likeness without consent. It sought unspecified damages.

"Steal This Movie!" which opened last fall, starred Vincent D'Onofrio as Abbie Hoffman. It traced the Yippie prankster's 1960s activism.

The lawsuit, filed in Superior Court in August, claimed the movie falsely portrayed Hoffman's son as "a wimpy, quiet, sulking and effeminate 'mama's boy'" and implied he might be gay.

The movie inaccurately portrayed the relationship between father and son, according to the suit.

"I understand that the filmmaker's characterization of me and my relationship to my father was made in good faith and with honorable intentions," America Hoffman said in a statement after dropping the suit.

Abbie Hoffman was a member of the Chicago Seven, who staged a protest during the 1968 Democratic National Convention which led to violence and arrests. He overdosed on alcohol and pills in 1989 at age 52.

CALL TO ARTISTS

The Aperture and Buzz Art Galleries are now accepting submissions for future exhibits through 2001. Community and student artists are encouraged to apply. Contact the Visual Arts Coordinator at the UO Cultural Forum at 346-0007, or email gallery@darkwing.uoregon.edu for more information.

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| Fri. 1/12 | EAST EUROPEAN FOLK ENSEMBLE Participatory folk dancing to music of the Balkans. \$3 General Admission 8 p.m., Agate Hall |
| Sat. 1/20 | BOB MINTZER, Jazz Saxophone & OREGON JAZZ ENSEMBLE Guest Artist & UO Ensemble 7:30 p.m., Beall Hall \$10 General Admission, \$7 students & senior citizens |
| Tue. 1/23 | LUCY SHELTON, Soprano MILAGRO VARGAS, Mezzo-soprano Chamber Music Series 8 p.m., Beall Hall Reserved seats \$10, \$20, \$25, available at the Hult Center (682-5000) or EMU (346-4363) |

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