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AURAL GRATIFICATION

MTV jumps the abyss

Has it been a year already?

by Aaron Bong

For the most part, music award shows are boring. MTV, though, seems to be able to think of more than itself and jumps the abyss of self-satisfaction, allowing viewers to enjoy the show as well. Every year it puts out a fast-paced awards show that keeps in step with the likes and dislikes of the audience.

Roseanne, now going by her first name only, hosted the show. She was true to her beginnings as a stand-up comedienne. She fired off some very verbally explicit (as in swearing) jokes, oh so reminiscent of her early material. One of the most stinging moments was when Roseanne traded insults with MTV VJ Kennedy (from Lake Oswego), over whom Rush Limbaugh thought performed the best fellatio.

The show was at Radio City Music Hall, so silly me assumed that since all of these dancers came out and started to do a kick line they might be the Rockettes. Well, I was wrong. Roseanne came out, the dancers stopped, and she wanted to know "which one of you is screwing my ex"—to which all the dancers took off their wigs, showed everyone they were actually in drag, retorted "Who isn't," and danced off the stage.

One problem, commented on by Sheryl Crow, was the lack of live female acts on stage. The night was dominated by groups that were all—or at least mostly—male, with Salt-N-Pepa being the only female group to perform. Women were also rare in receiving actual trophies, with only four out of 20 of "the spacemen" going to women or women's groups. One was the Best Female Video of the Year award, which went to Janet Jackson for her smash dance single "If."

The award for Best Dance Video went to Salt-N-Pepa with En Vogue for their collaboration on "Whatta Man." My choice would have been one of the other nominees, Crystal Waters, for "100% Pure Love."

My award for the best recovery from a mix-up in lines goes to Adam Sandler. He and Sandra Bullock were presenting the award for Best Video from a Movie. Adam had commented on how good Sandra looked in the summer blockbuster *Speed*. Then Sandra asked Adam, "So, um, tell me, what was it like kissing Keanu Reeves?" Sandra then became visibly embarrassed, apologized, and began to explain that she had just read Adam Sandler's line. Sandler decided to go with her lead and answer the question. He said, "Well, I like soft little kisses, and Keanu just came at me really strong, and I had to say, 'Hey, Keanu, kiss me, don't swallow me.'" Sandra looked like she had seen a car accident—was it just me, or did Bullock display a bit of homophobia? She tried to continue with the award presentation, but Sandler interrupted, saying, "Now I feel bad. I mean, I don't want to make Keanu look bad, he had some very nice qualities. Well, for one, he has very nice hips, and very strong arms, and when he held me in his arms I felt very safe."

Bullock then wrested the mike from Sandler and introduced the nominees. After the nominees

were named, the audience sounded like it was booing. At first I thought that they might be reacting to Sandler's ad lib, but I came to the conclusion that they were chanting "Bruce, Bruce." Bruce Springsteen did receive the award, for his song "Streets of Philadelphia."

Aerosmith, a vocal favorite of the crowd, picked up the Viewers' Choice, Best Group Video, and Best Video of the Year awards. I'm not sure they deserved that last one. I can think of several other videos more appealing than Aerosmith's "Cryin'."

The Rolling Stones were given a Special Recognition award for lifetime achievement. After a long and labored introduction, followed by the award presentation, and a performance by the Stones, I could only think of one reason why. The band wouldn't have won an award otherwise (it wasn't nominated in any other category), and ticket sales aren't going that great for its *Voodoo Lounge* tour. Mick, build a bridge and get over it. Your time on stage is more than up.

One of the most interesting moments of the show was when Chuck D and Flavor Flav of Public

Enemy came out to present the Best Rap Video award. It went to Snoop Doggy Dogg for "Doggystyle." During the presentation, Chuck D and Flavor Flav made a statement that America has political prisoners and that prisoners such as Mike Tyson (who was jailed on charges of abusing and raping a female acquaintance) should be released. This was met with very loud booing from the audience, mixed with some minor cheering.

During the commercial break, oddly enough, MTV aired a graphic public service announcement regarding spousal abuse. The spot showed a man and a woman on a bed. The man would intermittently hit the woman and kiss her, or stroke her hair. A voice-over told viewers

that "No matter how many times he says no, it will probably happen again." At the end of the spot a stop sign appeared with "enough is enough" written on it. A message urged battered women to call their local antiviolence project. Hmm. I wonder if that was any kind of response to the comments by Chuck D and Flavor Flav?

The later part of the show featured a necessary, and carefully composed, tribute to Kurt Cobain. It was tastefully done and one of the few tributes that I have actually enjoyed. Nirvana received awards for Best Art Direction and Best Alternative Video, both for "Heart-Shaped Box."

"Black Hole Sun" pulled down the Best Metal/Hard Rock Video award for Seattle's Soundgarden.

Tom Petty, looking very good in his new haircut, accepted the Video Vanguard award. Petty also won the Best Male Video award for his song "Last Dance with Mary Jane."

HEADS UP:

Watch for Madonna's new album, *Bedtime Stories*, due out any time. The Pet Shop Boys' latest, *Disco 2*, with remixes from *Very*, is out now. Keep listening!



Host Roseanne showed off her new plastic surgery.