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In this file photo singer Beyoncé Knowles performs onstage during the 2011 MTV Video Music Awards at Nokia Theatre L.A. LIVE in Los Angeles, California. — AFP photos



In this file photo Singer Taylor Swift accepts the award for the Album of the Year onstage during the 58th Annual Grammy music Awards in Los Angeles.



In this file photo Roddy Ricch performs at SUMMERSFEST 2019 at The Novo by Microsoft in Los Angeles, California.



In this file photo British singer-songwriter Dua Lipa poses as she arrives for the amfAR 26th Annual Cinema Against AIDS gala at the Hotel du Cap-Eden-Roc in Cap d'Antibes, southern France.

# GRAMMY NOMINATIONS 2021: SNUBS, QUIRKS AND TWISTS

The short lists for the 63rd annual Grammy awards that celebrate music's best feature an eclectic mix of pop powerhouses, feisty chart-toppers and little-known underdogs. And, as usual, there was a laundry list of eyebrow-raising snubs and a bunch of straight up oddball nods. Here's a look at the kookier nominations and head-scratchers in this year's Grammy race:

## Snubs

The Recording Academy notably sidelined Canadian R&B singer The Weeknd, an artist with three Grammys to his name. His Day Glo-nostalgia hit "Blinding Lights" achieved global success, and the artist born Abel Tesfaye is set to headline the high-octane Super Bowl halftime show early next year. But despite being widely tipped as a possible 2021 frontrunner, The Weeknd didn't receive a single nomination. It was another year, another letdown for K-pop, an international phenomenon the Academy has been glacial to accept.

The sensation BTS is up for a single award in the pop categories, meaning it was shut out of the general field even though its English-language hit "Dynamite" was considered a strong contender for Record or Song of the Year. And the South Korean girl group Blackpink—which in recent years collabo-

rated on bangers with Cardi B, Lady Gaga and Dua Lipa—was surprisingly left out of the Best New Artist race. Gaga was relegated to the pop categories as was Harry Styles, whose trippy pop album "Fine Line" and its provocative track "Watermelon Sugar" garnered positive reviews.

After dropping a widely praised album after a 14-year hiatus and a name change, The Chicks were also ignored, as was Bob Dylan, who this year released his first collection of original music in nearly a decade. Fiona Apple—whose classic "Criminal" won her Best New Artist in 1997—scored three nominations in the rock and alternative categories but was mysteriously dropped from the top fields. The famously reclusive songwriter released her fifth studio album "Fetch The Bolt Cutters" in the pandemic's early days—a career-defining work many critics called a "masterpiece."

## Quirks

Though most of the rap categories featured of-the-moment stars, Best Rap Album was decidedly throwback, with older artists Nas, Freddie Gibbs, Jay Electronica, D Smoke and Royce Da 5'9" commanding the field. The move seemed surprising for a genre brimming with young, streaming-friendly talent—but

it's not unlike the Academy to reward the timeworn and technique-driven. A little less than a month after his chaotic presidential bid ended, Kanye West notched a 2021 Grammy nomination—but it had nothing to do with rap. No, the artist who shook hip-hop with his 2004 album "The College Dropout" is up for Best Contemporary Christian Music Album, in recognition of his ode to evangelism "Jesus Is King." The late 2019 album paints a portrait of the artist as a saved man, coming in a year that saw West tour with his impromptu "Sunday Service" performances, a church-esque concert series featuring gospel choirs.

The spoken word category that regularly features unexpected Grammy contenders—both Michelle and Barack Obama are past winners—this year includes journalists Rachel Maddow and Ronan Farrow. Red Hot Chili Peppers' bassist Flea is also nominated for his memoir, as is Meryl Streep for her reading of the children's book "Charlotte's Web," and Ken Jennings, star of "Jeopardy!," for reading the memoir written by the beloved game show's late host Alex Trebek. "Eurovision" got an unlikely shoutout this time around, as the soundtrack for a comedy film about the kitschy contest was nominated for Best Compilation Soundtrack For Visual Media.

## Twists

British anthemic pop-rock band Coldplay—whose songs are perennial favorites of television show soundtracks and political campaigns—scored a surprise Album of the Year nomination for its eighth studio work, "Everyday Life." And the still relatively obscure act Black Pumas are back, after the Texan psychedelic soul duo last year snagged a surprise nomination for Best New Artist. This year, they bested chart-toppers including Lady Gaga, The Weeknd and Styles along with critical darling Apple to snag Record and Album of the Year nods. The 2021 field features a number of posthumous nominations, including two for the revered American songwriter John Prine, who died of coronavirus complications in April.

Leonard Cohen, who died in 2016, received a Best Folk Album nomination for "Thanks for the Dance," a collection of raw vocals the Canadian legend's son finished for him. And Brooklyn drill rapper Pop Smoke—who was shot dead in the Hollywood Hills in February 2020—received one nomination for Best Rap Performance for "Dior." The late artist will compete in that category with another rapper who died young: Nipsey Hussle, who won two posthumous awards last year, is up for "Deep Reverence," which he collaborated on with Big Sean. — AFP



In this file photo Britain's Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex (right), and his wife Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, pose for a photo with their newborn baby son, Archie Harrison Mountbatten-Windsor, in St George's Hall at Windsor Castle in Windsor, west of London. — AFP

## Meghan Markle reveals miscarriage in July

Meghan Markle has revealed she suffered a miscarriage in July this year, writing in the New York Times yesterday of the deep grief and loss she endured with her husband Prince Harry. The Duchess of Sussex, who married the British prince in 2018, had the couple's first child, Archie, the following year. In the piece in the Times, the 39-year-old wrote that she had just changed her son's diaper when she felt a sharp cramp and fell to the ground. "I knew, as I clutched my firstborn child, that I was losing my second," she wrote. Writing of the "unbearable grief" of miscarriage, Markle said it was a conversation that remained "taboo, riddled with (unwarranted) shame, and perpetuating a cycle of solitary mourning."

Touching on the coronavirus, the Black Lives Matter movement, and the recent turbulent presidential election, the Duchess of Sussex nevertheless offered a message of hope. "For the first time, in a long time, as human beings, we are really seeing one another." Markle—whose mother is black—also wrote of the death of Breonna Taylor, as well as the killing of George Floyd, an unarmed African American killed in police custody. "Loss and pain have plagued every one of us in 2020, in moments both fraught and debilitating."

## Withdrawal from public

Markle's highly personal piece comes as she and her husband wage an increasingly public war with some media outlets over their right to privacy. But it carries with it the shadow of a previous royal bride—Harry's mother, Diana, Princess of Wales. Pressure from tabloids has dogged the British prince throughout his life, and he blames them for the death of his mother. Diana, whose treatment by the royals is shown in the

fourth season of Netflix's hugely popular "The Crown", also reportedly suffered a miscarriage in 1983 at Balmoral. Harry and Markle shocked the British establishment when they announced they were retiring from royal life.

Their withdrawal in March came after reports Markle was deeply unhappy with life inside the royal family and fed up with media intrusion. The couple, who live with their young son in California, signed an exclusive production deal with Netflix for an undisclosed fee earlier this year.

## 'Are you OK?'

Markle wrote that in July she realized—as she was comforted by Harry in hospital following the miscarriage—that "the only way to begin to heal is to first ask, 'Are you OK?'" Between ten and 15 percent of known pregnancies end in miscarriage, according to the US mother and childcare non-profit March of Dimes. "Some have bravely shared their stories; they have opened the door, knowing that when one person speaks truth, it gives license for all of us to do the same," Markle said. Her opinion piece comes after model and author Chrissy Teigen spoke candidly this year about a stillbirth that she and her husband, the singer John Legend, suffered.

Teigen published intimate pictures of the tragic moments after the infant, who they named Jack, died. The unvarnished post attracted praise and criticism in equal measure, but Teigen was unrepentant about her decision. "I lived it, I chose to do it, and more than anything, these photos aren't for anyone but the people who have lived this or are curious enough to wonder what something like this is like," she wrote. — AFP

## Leaf-cutter ant first insect found with biomineral body armor

A well-known leaf-cutting ant grows its own body armor using biominerals, a protective power previously unknown in the insect world, scientists have discovered in research published Tuesday showing this makes the ants almost unbeatable in battle. Biomineral armor is seen in the natural world in crustaceans like lobsters as well as in other marine animals—sea urchin spines contain calcium carbonate for example—but it has not previously been found in insects.

Researchers stumbled across the discovery while investigating the relationship between the fungus-growing ant species *Acromyrmex echinator* and antibiotic-producing bacteria that helps them protect their crops. They noticed that the larger worker ants, known as majors, have a "whitish, granular coating" over the surface of their bodies, according to co-author Cameron Currie, professor of Bacteriology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He said Hongjie Li, the lead author of the report published in Nature Communications, "became fascinated with the crystals" and discovered it was a biomineral layer that develops as the ants mature, increasing the hardness of their exoskeleton and covering nearly the entire body.

While researchers do not know for certain why the ants have this unusual armor, Currie told AFP they suspect it has a lot to do with the soldier ants of another species of fungus-growing ants, *Atta cephalotes*. The two species will often engage in territorial "ant wars", which the researchers simulated in lab-based battles. "When the Acro majors are without their armor the Atta soldiers quickly cut them into pieces, literally," Currie said.



This handout picture shows an *Acromyrmex echinator* worker (right) extending her mandibles over an *Atta cephalotes* soldier (left), the largest worker caste within the leaf-cutter ant colonies. — AFP

## KEY NOMINEES FOR THE 2021 GRAMMY AWARDS

Here is a list of nominees in the major categories for the 63rd annual Grammy Awards, which will be handed out on January 31, 2021. Beyoncé leads the pack with nine nominations, followed by Taylor Swift, Dua Lipa and rapper Roddy Ricch, all with six, organizers announced Tuesday.

### Album of the Year

Jhene Aiko, "Chilombo"  
Black Pumas, "Black Pumas (Deluxe Edition)"  
Coldplay, "Everyday Life"  
Jacob Collier, "Djesse Vol. 3"  
Haim, "Women In Music Pt. III"  
Dua Lipa, "Future Nostalgia"  
Post Malone, "Hollywood's Bleeding"  
Taylor Swift, "Folklore"

### Record of the Year, recognizing overall performance on a song

Beyoncé, "Black Parade"  
Black Pumas, "Colors"  
DaBaby featuring Roddy Ricch, "Rockstar"  
Doja Cat, "Say So"  
Billie Eilish, "Everything I Wanted"  
Dua Lipa, "Don't Start Now"  
Post Malone, "Circles"  
Megan Thee Stallion featuring Beyoncé, "Savage"

### Song of the Year, recognizing songwriting

Beyoncé, Denisia Andrews, Stephen Bray, Shawn Carter, Brittany Coney, Derek James Dixie, Akil King, Kim "Kardence" Krystiuk and Rickie "Case" Tice, "Black Parade"  
Roddy Ricch and Samuel Gloade, "The Box"  
Taylor Swift and Aaron Dessner, "Cardigan"  
Post Malone, Louis Bell, Adam Feeney, Kean Gunesberk and Billy Walsh, "Circles"  
Dua Lipa, Caroline Ailin, Ian Kirkpatrick, Dua Lipa and Emily Warren, "Don't Start Now"  
Billie Eilish and Finneas O'Connell, "Everything I Wanted"  
H.E.R., Dernst Emile II and Tiara Thomas, "I Can't Breathe"  
Julia Michaels and JP Saxe, "If The World Was Ending"

### Best New Artist

Ingrid Andress  
Phoebe Bridgers  
Chika  
Noah Cyrus  
D Smoke  
Doja Cat  
Kaytranada  
Megan Thee Stallion

### Best Music Video

Beyoncé, "Brown Skin Girl"  
Future featuring Drake, "Life Is Good"  
Anderson .Paak, "Lockdown"  
Harry Styles, "Adore You"  
Woodkid, "Goliath"

### Best Rap Album

D Smoke, "Black Habits"  
Freddie Gibbs & The Alchemist, "Alfredo"  
Jay Electronica, "A Written Testimony"  
Nas, "King's Disease"  
Royce Da 5'9", "The Allegory"

### Best Rock Album

Fontaines DC, "A Hero's Death"  
Michael Kiwanuka, "Kiwanuka"  
Grace Potter, "Daylight"  
Sturgill Simpson, "Sound & Fury"  
The Strokes, "The New Abnormal"

### Best Pop Vocal Album

Justin Bieber, "Changes"  
Lady Gaga, "Chromatica"  
Dua Lipa, "Future Nostalgia"  
Harry Styles, "Fine Line"  
Taylor Swift, "Folklore"

### Best Alternative Music Album

Fiona Apple, "Fetch the Bolt Cutters"  
Beck, "Hyperspace"  
Phoebe Bridgers, "Punisher"  
Brittany Howard, "Jaime"  
Tame Impala, "The Slow Rush"

### Best Global Music Album

Antibalas, "Fu Chronicles"  
Burna Boy, "Twice as Tall"  
Bebel Gilberto, "Agora"  
Anoushka Shankar, "Love Letters"  
Tinariwen, "Amadjar"—AFP