

ENTERTAINMENT

Jay-Z leads nominees for MTV Video Awards

MIAMI (AP) - The MTV Video Music Awards are all about scene-stealing stunts, so it was fitting Tuesday when the network announced that stars will approach this year's red carpet on luxury yachts and the entire show will be host-free.

Oh yeah — Jay-Z's jarring video for "99 Problems," which depicts his own murder as a metaphor for his retirement from rapping, had a leading six nominations. Beyonce, No Doubt, and OutKast had five nominations each.

Hip-hop stars Missy Elliott and Usher braved the heat and humidity to announce nominations at the luxury Mandarin Oriental hotel. The awards will be handed out Aug. 29 at the bayfront American Airlines Arena.

"The awards show here is



Jay-Z, left, and girlfriend Beyonce perform "Crazy in Love" during the BET Awards on June 24 in Los Angeles.

Brandy's ex: Couple never married

NEW YORK (AP) - Two years ago, Brandy announced that she had been secretly married for months.

It turns out the real secret may be that she was never married at all.

Music producer Robert Smith told New York radio station WBSL-FM that he and Brandy were never wed as she had claimed. Speaking to Wendy Williams on Tuesday, Smith said their supposed marriage was a ruse to protect the image of Brandy, who was then pregnant with their daughter, Sy'rai.

Smith also reportedly made similar statements on another New York radio station,

WQHT-FM.

Courtney Barnes, a representative for Brandy, refused to comment on whether Brandy and Smith were indeed wed when contacted by The Associated Press Thursday.

However, Brandy released a statement that read: "I am deeply hurt and shocked by the things that Robert has been saying. We had a spiritual union and true commitment to each other, and we still share a common bond through our daughter, Sy'rai.

"He is trying to destroy my reputation, while using me and our daughter to get pub-

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going to be hot. I mean literally hot," joked Elliott, who was wearing a camouflage hat and shorts and a Black T-shirt in the 90-degree heat.

Beyonce was up for her dance hit "Naughty Girl" and "Me, Myself and I." No Doubt was picked for Gwen Stefani's angry acting in "It's My Life" and OutKast for its Ed Sullivan Show-on-acid video of "Hey Ya."

Performers will include Usher, Jessica Simpson, newcomer Kanye West and a rock threesome of Jet, Hoobastank and Yellowcard.

"I've got a few ideas up my sleeve," Usher said of his performance. "Miami will be the light of life that night."

Organizers touted the fact that many of music's biggest stars will be pulling up to the arena in luxury yachts as part of their red-carpet entrance. Usher, wearing a White T-shirt beneath a long-sleeved button-down shirt, jeans and orange-and-yellow neon shoes, was already bragging about his boat.

"There's going to be a lot of muscle out there. So I'm going to have to have a sexy



Singers Missy Elliott and Usher hug as they pose for photographers after they announced some of the MTV Video Music Awards nominees at a Tuesday ceremony in Miami.

one," he said.

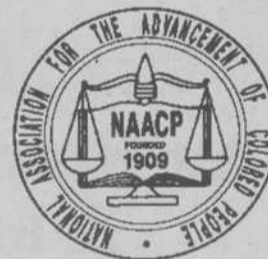
The awards spectacle is much anticipated in Miami. City officials and event planners are organizing private parties for the preening VIPs expected to flock to steamy South Florida, filling hotels, restaurants and nightclubs.

It's the awards' 21st year, but the first time it will be

held outside Los Angeles or New York. MTV President Van Toffler joked that the awards are "finally legal" and promised more memorable moments, such as the Britney Spears-Madonna onstage kiss last year or the Neil Young-Pearl Jam performance of "Rockin in the Free World" (See Video Awards, Page 9)

Conventional
LaBelle,
Conventional
Lady

Singer Patti LaBelle performs Monday at the Democratic National Convention in Boston. Democrats holding their national convention were galvanized by an electrifying performance from former president Bill Clinton and blistering criticism of President George W. Bush.



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