

ENTERTAINMENT

West earns 10 Grammy nominations

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Grammys have gone autobiographical. Kanye West raps about religion, his fears and his own greatness. Usher steamed up the charts with songs about sex, affairs and breakups. Alicia Keys sang about aching for love, confiding secrets and imagining a different future for herself.

Their reward for the tell-all music — a collection of Grammy nominations Tuesday, 10 for West and eight each for Keys and Usher.

After last year's glossy pop, rap and rock led by OutKast's Grammy-winning "Hey Ya!," all three of these artists energized the charts this year by exposing deeply personal emotions, ideas, desires, flaws and insecurities.

"I think we all put a piece of ourselves, if not all of ourselves — I know I put every single inch — into my music, my songs, my production and everything. I think that's something that can be said for all three of us," Keys told The Associated Press.

Producer-turned-rapper West led all Grammy nominees and scored a bid for album of the year for his debut "The College Dropout," which stood out in the rap landscape because of its atypical prose.

It avoided the usual plotlines about sex, money and violence and touched on everything from his faith to his fears of

Diggs target of threats

NEW YORK (AP) — Idina Menzel, star of the Broadway musical "Wicked," and her husband, actor Taye Diggs have received hateful threats because of their interracial marriage.

The couple was the focus of at least three letters last week in which bodily harm was threatened, the New York Post reported in Monday editions.

Despite the threats, Menzel still performed on Sunday, arriving at the Gershwin Theater under

Harlem

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\$1.6 million, enough to sustain the school as supplementary fundraising efforts are initiated.

In addition to \$333,000 previously allocated from the City of New York and the New York State Council on the Arts, \$100,000 was allocated by the New York State Ways and Means Committee, and \$1.18 million was raised by major private donors including the Irene Diamond Fund, Carl and Lily Pforzheimer Foundation, and Altria Group Inc., including \$500,000 from an anonymous donor also known as Mayor Michael Bloomberg, according to reports.

Kaiser is credited with turning around the fortunes of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, American Ballet Theatre and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. At the Kennedy Center, he has initiated a Capacity Building Program aimed at improving management expertise at arts organizations of color.

He will continue to serve as a pro bono consultant to DTH for the next year.

Kaiser said, "I am confident with the new Board and administrative leadership to complement Mr. Mitchell's enduring vision and talent, the Dance Theatre of Harlem is emerging from this period of turmoil to become a stronger and more stable institution than it has been in its 35-year history."

Zita Allen writes for the Amsterdam News



Kanye West is the musical force du jour.

failure and other crises from his life.

He also had a nomination for best new artist and shared a songwriting bid for song of the year with his religious hit "Jesus Walks."

The performer is known for bragging. In the press room at the recent American Music Awards, he claimed he was "definitely robbed" when he picked up no trophies.

Even his braggadocio style may mask his insecurities. "I'm scared of getting 10 nominations and losing. It's happened before," he said after helping announce the Grammy nominees at the Music Box Theatre in Hollywood.

West also was apologetic and regretful over the way he reacted at the AMAs last month. "I should have accepted that more gracefully. I'm really ashamed of the way I reacted to that situation."

Half of West's 10 nominations were in the rap field, including best rap album. He competes against himself in

the best rap-sung collaboration with the songs "Slow Jamz," performed along with Twista and actor-singer Jamie Foxx, and "All Falls Down," which he performed with Syleena Johnson. The eight respective nominations for Usher and Keys, who collaborated on the hit "My Boo," included album of the year for Keys' "The Diary of Alicia Keys" and Usher's "Confessions."

"I feel like: don't celebrate too early, definitely take it one step at a time," Usher said. "I recognize that this hard work did not go unnoticed. And if I do not win album of the year, which is the one I'm most interested in winning, then so be it."

Keys, whose 2001 debut album, "Songs In A Minor," won the R&B singer five Grammys, said this time through the awards process is even sweeter. "I've just been on a different level in terms of my experience. It's like, I've been able to just take things in and be almost on top of it as opposed to being underneath it swimming," she said.

Ray Charles, whose posthumous duets album, "Genius Loves Company," became the biggest selling album of his long career, had seven nominations including album of the year and record of the year for "Here We Go Again," sung with Norah Jones.

Radio host pulled for salty political slam

MILWAUKEE (AP) — A radio station indefinitely suspended a talk-show host after he used an obscenity on the air while criticizing state lawmakers. Michael McGee's "Word Warriors" show was canceled because the expletive may have violated federal broadcast law, Jerrel Jones, owner of WNOV-AM, said Friday.

McGee uttered the word last Thursday as he criticized state lawmakers' handling of a social service agency that has come under fire over how it has used money from the state's welfare-to-work program. A recent state audit showed the Opportunities Industrialization Center of Greater Milwaukee paid McGee \$176,000 from the program to sponsor his show from 1997 to 2003.

McGee, a former Milwaukee alderman, said he believes lawmakers' criticisms of the OIC were racially motivated. The center has a predominantly Black staff and clientele. McGee defended his use of the obscenity, saying he meant to imply that legislators were stupid: "It was offensive and it was meant to be offensive, based on their stupid actions related to OIC," he said.

McGee said he had "voluntarily suspended" his show for the sake of the radio station, but Jones said he ordered the suspension because he does not want to jeopardize his Federal Communications Commission license.

"I'm walking on eggshells with the FCC," Jones said.

Jones said he received complaints after a report in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel about McGee's use of the expletive.

An FCC spokeswoman said the agency had not received any complaints against McGee or WNOV by Friday. Jones said he would issue an on-air apology on Monday. Jones said he'll decide whether to put McGee back on the air after listening to tapes of his show.

The controversy is the latest in a series of disputes in Wisconsin about radio hosts' language.

Conservative Milwaukee radio show host Mark Belling was taken off the air for a week last month after referring to undocumented Mexican immigrants as "wetbacks," sparking protests and the withdrawal of some advertisers. In Madison, morning radio personality John "Sly" Sylvester apologized for calling secretary of state nominee Condoleezza Rice "Aunt Jemima."

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