

# MTV Awards avoids glitches

*Special to Sentinel-Voice*

MIAMI- MTV dodged two major disasters — one from nature, the other from the barrel of a gun — as the Video Music Awards unfolded Sunday night with flashy performances, over-the-top bling and a few blasts from the past.

The annual bash was briefly overshadowed by Hurricane Katrina, which hit southern Florida on Thursday and killed several people. As the storm passed, a celebratory mood took over the city — until early Sunday morning, when rap mogul Suge Knight was targeted by gunfire at a Kanye West party.

MTV vowed that neither event would affect the ceremonies — and they didn't.

"The theme of tonight is, anything can happen," proclaimed host Diddy, whose entrance included dancers, pyrotechnics and a cascading waterfall — a spectacle that rivaled the show's actual performances.

Ludacris managed to turn his hedonistic "Pimpin' All Over the World" into a multicultural Mardi Gras-like extravaganza, complete with steel drummers, African dancers and, of course, around-the-way booty-shaking girls.

When it comes to booty shaking, Luke of 2 Live Crew fame is the king with his infamous dancers, and he brought a bevy of women to dance with Diddy and R&B heartthrob Omarion.

But one of the biggest surprises was a performance from MC Hammer, recapturing some of his glory while shaking to his '90s hit, "U Can't Touch This."

Another flashback moment came in a tribute to Diddy's protégé, the late Notorious B.I.G., that featured Diddy "conducting" a string orchestra as the legendary rapper's songs played. Snoop Dogg came out at the end and delivered a verse on the B.I.G. hit "Warning."

West was among the early winners with "Jesus Walks" taking best male video.

"I guess they're saying, 'We're going to give him his award early so we don't have to worry about nothin'," said West, referencing his infamous American Music Awards tantrum last year.

"It's great to know that rock music still has a place at MTV," said lead singer Billie Joe Armstrong, speaking of hip-hop's recent take-



Rapper-producer Kanye West rejoices with actor-comic-singer Jamie Foxx during the MTV Music Video Awards.

over of the music industry.

The evening's most inexplicable moment may have come from R. Kelly, who remains a chart-topper even though he's awaiting trial on child pornography charges.

On a bedroom set that looked like a scene from a Tyler Perry play, Kelly deliberately lip-synced highlights of his five-part soap opera infidelity song, "Trapped In The Closet," then debuted a new chapter involving a cheating wife, a cheating husband and his boyfriend.

Some of the night's more decadent moments came during the pre-show arrivals. Lil Jon came by sea, on what looked to be a three-story, pimp-my-yacht contraption. The prison-bound Lil' Kim arrived on the white carpet in a Rolls Royce Phantom, though she looked somewhat demure in her low-cut mauve dress — no pasties or dangling appendages this year from the diminutive rapper.

"I might show some leg," teased the star, who is due to start serving a year-and-a-day sentence in September on a perjury charge. When MTV personality Sway delicately asked if she had anything to say to fans who "might not see you for a while," Lil' Kim said: "You can write me letters."

"Entourage" star Jeremy Piven couldn't help but tease her about her upcoming bid as they presented best rap video, "Number One Spot" which was won by Ludacris.

"You know, she's about to go to the big house, for ly-

ing," he said of Lil' Kim. "I'd like to place a call to the warden and upgrade your situation."

The much-hyped white carpet was one of one of the Diddy-designed elements of the show. Another was the "Diddy Fashion Challenge" — in which he vowed to give away \$50,000 each to the charities of the best dressed female and male at the event. Amerie, Gwen Stefani and Eva Longoria were the three female finalists; Usher, West and a pimped-out Snoop Dogg were the male finalists. Diddy himself was out of the running, though you wouldn't know it — he made three wardrobe changes in the first half-hour.

Other moonman winners of the night included two trophies to Missy Elliott, featuring Ciara and Fat Man Scoop for best hip-hop and best dance videos, "Lose Control."

The awards typically snowball into a weeklong party with decadent A-list bashes, but Hurricane Katrina forced the cancellation of some events. Several stars, like West, were late arriving to Miami because of the weather.

Knight, the Death Row Records founder who has been at the center of some of hip-hop's most violent moments, was shot in the leg early Sunday morning at a star-studded party thrown by West. His injuries were not life-threatening; no arrests were made.

# Keys tapped for return of 'Unplugged' series

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MIAMI- Alicia Keys has resurrected "MTV Unplugged."

The singer and pianist has performed an acoustic set for the dormant MTV series, to air Sept. 23.

MTV also announced Tuesday that the show will first premiere Sept. 15 on Overdrive, MTV's broadband network.

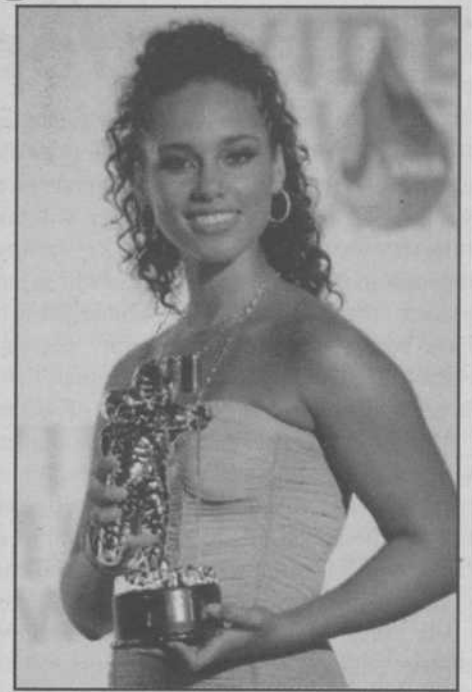
Keys had just received the award for Best R&B Video at the 2005 MTV Video Music awards in Miami on Sunday.

"I've always been a very big fan of the show and when they stopped doing it, I was like, what happened to 'MTV Unplugged?' I specifically went in there and said we have to do an 'Unplugged,'" Keys told AP Radio.

Keys' performance, filmed July 14 at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, is a group effort. Mos Def, Common and Damian Marley are her guests, as well as Maroon 5's Adam Levine.

"Adam Levine and I remade the Rolling Stones' classic 'Wild Horses' and it is right up my alley, that whole style," Keys said.

"It has a style of its own but still stays



ALICIA KEYS

very true to the classic arrangement and I love it."

After Keys' "MTV Unplugged" episode airs, it will be released as a CD and DVD on October 11.

