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Deep Emotions at the 2012 Grammy Awards

By Adrienne Papp | February 17, 2012



On a night of celebration that was overshadowed by the sudden death of one of its own, Whitney Houston, a singer who was once one of pop music's most radiant young stars, the music world got together to celebrate the ascendance of its newest star, 23-year-old British R&B-soul singer Adele, who swept the awards show Sunday night with six Grammy Awards for the soulful vocalizations she crafted out of her own pain and romantic despair. It was a time to mourn, and also a night to sing.

Adele delivered the biggest album of 2011 with "21," a recording that established her as a mature artist exploring the emotional turmoil of a painful romantic breakup, and scored the year's biggest single "Rolling in the Deep." The British songstress, who also made a triumphant comeback from vocal cord surgery performing on the Grammy stage, was clearly emotional as she won the night's final award, an Album of the Year Grammy for "21." It was last year's top-selling album with more than six million copies sold and remains lodged at the No. 1 spot on this year's charts. She won in all six categories in which she was nominated, including the triple crowns of Album, Record and Song of the Year for widely acclaimed work that reaches to soulful depths and delivers solace and hope.

But many in attendance were still shaken by the death of Whitney Houston, who was found dead in her room at the Beverly Hilton, apparently due to a combination of alcohol and prescription drug consumption although not yet officially confirmed by the coroner, but widely spread on TV and the topic of all main stream channels. Houston, who died at age 48 on the eve of the Grammy show, had struggled for years with drug abuse and painful personal issues. She died just hours before she had been scheduled to attend the annual pre-Grammy party hosted by Clive Davis, the veteran music executive who discovered and signed her to her first record contract nearly three decades ago, touching off her career as a superstar with soaring hit vocal performances including "I Will Always Love You," which also scored a blockbuster movie for her opposite Kevin Costner, "Saving All My Love for You" and, my personal favorite, "Greatest Love of All."

After Bruce Springsteen & the E Street Band opened the show with a rousing performance of the latest single, "We Take Care of Our Own," host LL Cool J offered a prayer for "our fallen sister," saying "There is no way around this. We had a death in our family," before leading the attendees in a prayer for "our sister Whitney." Stars like Lady Gaga and Miranda Lambert bowed their heads in silence. So did Mitch and Janis Winehouse, parents of Grammy winner Amy Winehouse, who died in July at age 27 and was awarded a posthumous award during the show. He then introduced a clip of Houston singing "I Will Always Love You," saying that it was "appropriate to proceed with an award show because the power of music is what brings us all here. That said, welcome to the 54th Grammy Awards." He then cued the segue leading to the evening's business of musical entertainment and glamour.

Clearly, just 24 hours after Houston died at the Beverly Hilton Hotel, the effects of Houston's tragic end and her memory reverberated throughout the evening. With little time to prepare, the Academy and the telecast's producers put together a simple and moving tribute to Houston, as Jennifer Hudson stepped up and

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performed one of Huston's signature tunes, "I Will Always Love you," a soaring ballad that celebrated the power of Huston's instrument, a pure and powerful voice that created anthems of enormous popularity during her hit making years in the 80s. Dressed in black, with only the accompaniment of a piano, Hudson appeared to fight back tears as she sang the song, ending with the line, "Whitney, we will always love you."

In his performance of "Runaway Baby," Bruno Mars also mentioned Houston's passing: "Tonight we're celebrating. Tonight we're celebrating the beautiful Miss Whitney Houston." Stevie Wonder also paid tribute to Houston, saying "To Whitney up in heaven, we all love you."

But while her death lent a somber overtone to the evening's show, it did not overwhelm the celebration of the year's finest music.

The other big winners, in addition to Adele, were Dave Grohl's Foo Fighters, who won five Grammys. Kanye West, who was the night's top nominee with seven, won four awards. Justin Vernon, whose band Bon Iver beat Nicki Minaj, The Band Perry, J. Cole and Skrillex for best new artist, accepted the award with admittedly mixed emotions.

The event also marked a comeback for Chris Brown, who performed twice during the show and won best R&B album: "First and foremost, I gotta thank God, and thank the Grammys for letting me get on this stage and do my thing," he said. "All my fans, I love you. We got one. Thank you."

The ceremony also marked first time he and Rihanna had performed at the same event, since his assault on her two years ago (she sang solo and with Coldplay during the ceremony).

Among the evening's key performances was an acrobatic dance number by Brown, a performance by Paul McCartney and by Bruce Springsteen, who kicked off the show by performing his new song "We Take Care of Our Own," a rousing anthem that addresses the troubles of the nation. Most performers did their best to keep a tone that balanced the mixed emotions of the night: The Foo Fighters performed in a tent outside the Staples Center, where the awards were being held, amid a throng of bouncing fans, and in another tribute, Alicia Keys and Bonnie Raitt paid tribute to Etta James, the legendary singer who died last month. And with Lady Gaga not performing, Nicki Minaj stepped in to provide the night's most bizarre and controversial performance. The rapper's number included a clip that referenced "The Exorcist" and a stage show that had her levitating on stage amid a church-like background, with hooded choir members and religious imagery, leaving many wondering what the response from the Catholic Church might be.

There was also a tribute to the recently reunited Beach Boys, celebrating their 50th anniversary, which featured Maroon 5, Foster the People and Mike Love, Al Jardine and Brian Wilson, the three remaining members of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame band, all singing in soaring harmony as they brought the group's California rock sound back to life in three beautifully performed songs, including their landmark "Good Vibrations."

Overall the spirit of this year's Grammy event was maybe best exemplified by the show's closing number, a jam session featuring Paul McCartney, Bruce Springsteen, Tom Petty, and Dave Grohl among others, uniting many of rock's great front men.

On a night when there was so much to be celebrated, the tragedy of Whitney Houston's death cast a pall over the proceeding in what many felt to be a needless death. Through the ups and downs of her life Houston had been in and out of rehab on several occasions, and was an admitted abuser of alcohol, and street and prescription drugs. With proper supervision and the right treatments this is a life that should not have been lost.

According to Dr. Drew, an addiction specialist prescription drug abuse is more dangerous these days than we thought and this is a topic that has been swept under the carpet for too long. He stated that "those older rock stars who used illegal drugs are still with us, but those with prescription abuse are going with a surprising rate." Another specialist stated on CNN that "one person dies every 19 minutes from prescription drug abuse."

More and more studies show now that certain natural supplements maybe helpful to those who chose to try nature's remedies to cope with stress and anxiety, which sometimes comes with just every day life or when someone is under intense pressure, instead of going for Rx drugs.

There are various remedies out there and many specialists with specific knowledge of how nutritional supplements and other therapies can help, some of which was mentioned by Deepak Chopra as well. In my quest to find some answers, I ended up with DNA Associate's David Litell who told me about a nutritional supplement called Cognition Ignition, which has a calming, clarifying effect, yet does not numb the brain. Using something as simple as this powerful, yet naturally-based combination of carefully selected ingredients, could potentially help people who struggle with the same issues that so many of us do, including Whitney Houston, along with a number of other big stars.

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and simply allows one to feel better and perform optimally. It certainly sounds like something like this could at times be a complete turn around in someone's life and break the cycle of dependence on drugs and alcohol, which combination as explained on CNN can be deadly. So many of our biggest stars' death were tragedies that could have been prevented, and should have.

Yes, the excesses of the entertainment industry have taken another life, but we also have much to celebrate with the achievements of Adele and all the other Grammy winners. There is much to look forward to in a number of great years to come in music!

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