

Rapper M.C. Hammer tops AMA nominations list

Keenen Ivory Wayans hosts music awards

By Amy Schmidt

More people watch the Oscars each year than any other awards show. The second most-watched awards ceremony is the American Music Awards.

This year, the 18th Annual American Music Awards will be telecast Monday, Jan. 28, on ABC from the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles. Host of the show is *In Living Color* star Keenen Ivory Wayans.

Hopes are high at ABC that the awards will garner an audience in excess of 60 million around the globe, matching the show's highest-ever viewing levels.

Fifty acts will compete for the coveted awards in six categories: Pop/Rock, Soul/Rhythm & Blues, Country, Heavy Metal, Rap, and Dance Music. In all, 27 awards will be presented, including those for Favorite Male and Female Artists, Favorite Band, Duo or Group, Favorite Album and Single, and Favorite New Artist. Phenomenally popular rapper M.C. Hammer, vying for an amazing seven AMA trophies, tops the list with the most nominations.

The show's other highlights will include an appearance by Gloria Estefan, her first since having been injured in an auto accident last year.

Now fully recovered, Estefan's American Music Awards performance will be followed by a world tour.

Also appearing on the show will be the musical (and marketing) phenomenon known as New Kids On The Block. The Dorchester, Mass., teens have now sold more tickets for personal appearances than any other group or artist in history — more than The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Elvis Presley, Frank Sinatra or Michael Jackson.

Other exciting performers scheduled to appear on this year's American Music Awards extravaganza include New Edition alumnus Bell Biv DeVoe, country star Clint Black, sizzling Mariah Carey, Australia's perennially popular INXS, country diva Reba McEntire, rapper Vanilla Ice, second-generation popsters Wilson Phillips, and M.C. Hammer.

Fans will want to keep an eye out for artists like Jon Bon Jovi, En Vogue, Larry Gatlin, Nelson, the Pointer Sisters, Keith Sweat, Al B. Sure!, Travis Tritt, Frankie Valli and the resurrected David Cassidy.

This year's esteemed Award of Merit will be presented to perennial country star, songsmith Merle Haggard for his "outstanding contributions, over a long period of time, to the musical entertainment of the American public." Haggard joins an awe-inspiring list of previous recipients that includes



Perennial country star Merle Haggard will be accorded the AMA's special Award of Merit.

Bing Crosby, Berry Gordy, Irving Berlin, Johnny Cash, Ella Fitzgerald, Perry Como, Benny Goodman, Stevie Wonder, Chuck Berry, Kenny Rogers, Michael Jackson, Loretta Lynn, Paul McCartney, the Beach Boys, Willie Nelson and Neil Diamond.

American Music Award winners are selected by the public. A national sampling of 20,000 people, allowing for disparate demographic factors such as age, sex, ethnicity and regional differences, are sent ballots by Broadcast Research & Consulting, Inc. Names of the nominees on the ballots are compiled from the year-end sales charts of the music industry magazine *Cash Box*. Results of the voting are kept secret until envelopes are opened during the presentation ceremonies.

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Kirstie Alley (pictured) co-hosts *The Movie Awards* with Robert Townsend, Wednesday on CBS.

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