The (K)New School Grammys: The Winners of the Grammys Decided by Their Altamont Fanbases

By Camden Pierce

The Grammy Awards claim to be the most prestigious honor in the music industry. Since 1959, a Grammy has represented major achievement in the recording and performing arts. These awards are presented by The Recording Academy, whose members decide the outcome of the ceremony. However, this council has not had the best track record with inclusivity. In recent years, the board has been reformed into a more diverse group of qualified artists and critics, while in the past the members of the judging panel have been exclusively white, catering to white media and consumers, while the creativity of minorities was forgotten or ignored. This continued even though so much lucrative cultural expression was stolen from genres like rock, blues, jazz, and soul, which were rebranded and integrated into "white music." After decades of this unfairness, in a recent scandal, The Recording Academy silently switched up the members of the council, altered their mission statement, and began an advocacy chapter. As of now, the Academy's values include passion, collaboration, integrity, service, diversity, and inclusion, all traits that have not been displayed until now.



With the voices of so many being silenced for ages, now is time for even more change. Just as the voices of seasoned professionals and older generations are important, the opinions of younger people hold the same value, because they are the fanbases of this cycle of new artists. So, in the spirit of doing what you can, when you can, and where you can, below is a report on Altamont's "real" Grammy-winners, based on an opinion poll taken by students last month.

The (K)New School Winners

In the student poll, respondents were asked to vote for who they think *should* have won each Grammy award and why. Here are the results:

In the category of "Best New Artist," students chose **Olivia Dean**.

In the category of "Song of the Year," students chose "**Manchild**" by Sabrina Carpenter.

In the category of "Best Dance Pop Recording," students chose "**Just Keep Watching**" by Tate McRae.

In the category of “Best Duo/Group Performance,” students chose “**Defying Gravity**” by Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo.

In the category of “Album of the Year,” students chose “**Man’s Best Friend**” by Sabrina Carpenter.

In the student poll, the winners of three of the five categories – Album of the Year, Song of the Year, and Best Dance Pop Recording – contrast with the Academy’s final decisions. The artists from these categories, Sabrina Carpenter and Tate McRae, are a part of the new Pop-Artist scene and deemed the “Pop Girlies” by fans online. The two universal, agreed-upon favorites by Altamont students and the Academy are old-soul Olivia Dean and “Defying Gravity” from the Wicked Soundtrack.

The Explanations

The Recording Academy’s seasoned professionals perform technical dissection on an entire piece. The ear of the average consumer is not trained to flawlessly pick apart each track on an album, which is reflected in the responses from the student poll. None of the student feedback had anything to do with production quality. However, the student feedback suggested that the popularity of an album or song was related to the artists themselves. Sabrina Carpenter’s light-hearted vulgarity won over the hearts of many, as she won both of her student poll nominations. Her fun artistry and marketing tactics have placed her at the forefront of younger pop culture. From appearances at age-appropriate events like The Kid’s Choice Awards to her social media presence, she is in touch with the younger demographic. Additionally, Carpenter’s rise to fame and reputation as a child Disney star gives her a sense of familiarity with younger people. Similarly, Alex Warren, whose career began on TikTok, almost tied Olivia Dean for Best New Artist votes in the student poll; much of his Altamont-student feedback referenced his rise to fame. During 2020, Warren gained a huge Internet following and global influence on younger demographics through his content creation cohort The Hype House. Finally, based on the student poll, it appears that there is less appreciation for “innovative” tracks. Students chose less experimental, more familiar pieces like “Just Keep Watching” by Tate McRae for Best Dance Pop Recording. This contrasts with The Recording Academy’s focus on rewarding more experimental pieces, like the winner for Best Dance Pop Recording, “Abracadabra” by Lady Gaga.

So, it turns out that young Altamont students, in a way, are more “old school” than the adults that chose the actual Grammys. Maybe that’s another hint that, since things are changing anyway, young people should have more of a say over who wins these prestigious awards.