

# Jay-Z, Outkast take top honors at VMAs

By Adrian Sainz  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**"I guess this means there ain't any more competition between me and Justin anymore, right?"**

—Usher, after winning the award for best male video

MIAMI — Holding its festivities for the first time in the city of skin, Sunday's MTV Video Music Awards was sizzling, energetic and colorful yet tame, by MTV standards.

There were no wardrobe malfunctions. Britney didn't kiss Madonna like last year or anyone else. The most skin shown was from Usher, who preened in front of the camera barechested as simulated raindrops fell on his chiseled body during the opening performance.

Even the Christina Aguilera was classy, dressed sexy yet demurely as she debuted a jazzy number, "Tilt Ya Head" with rapper Nelly. And the sometimes raunchy comedian Dave Chappelle even kept it relatively clean, despite teasing he wouldn't.

"It's the biggest mistake you made since Janet Jackson at the Super Bowl," he joked, alluding to the MTV-produced Super Bowl halftime show that created a firestorm earlier this year.

There may have been plenty of sex appeal, but little shock appeal on hand, even though MTV was ready, using a several-second tape delay for the first time. (The audio delay, used for years, was in heavy use during the hip-hop medley, which featured Lil Jon, Petey Pablo and Fat Joe.)

Still, MTV provided the already broiling Miami with even more sizzle Sunday night as MTV brought its annual party known to the city for the first time in the awards' 21-year history.

The change of scenery for the awards, typically held in New York or Los Angeles, helped raise the decadence level at the already raucous, celebrity-soaked affair, held at the downtown American Airlines Arena.

Outkast's vivid "Hey Ya!" — perhaps best described as the old Ed Sullivan show on acid — won four awards, including video of the year. Jay-Z's "99 Problems," the most nominated video with six, also won four. The gritty black-and-white "99 Problems," depicts his own killing as a metaphor for his much-ballyhooded retirement, which has yet to happen.

"I felt like I was trying to push the envelope," Jay-Z, dressed in a dapper white suit and hat, said as he accepted a moonman for best rap video. "That was my punishment and this is my reward."

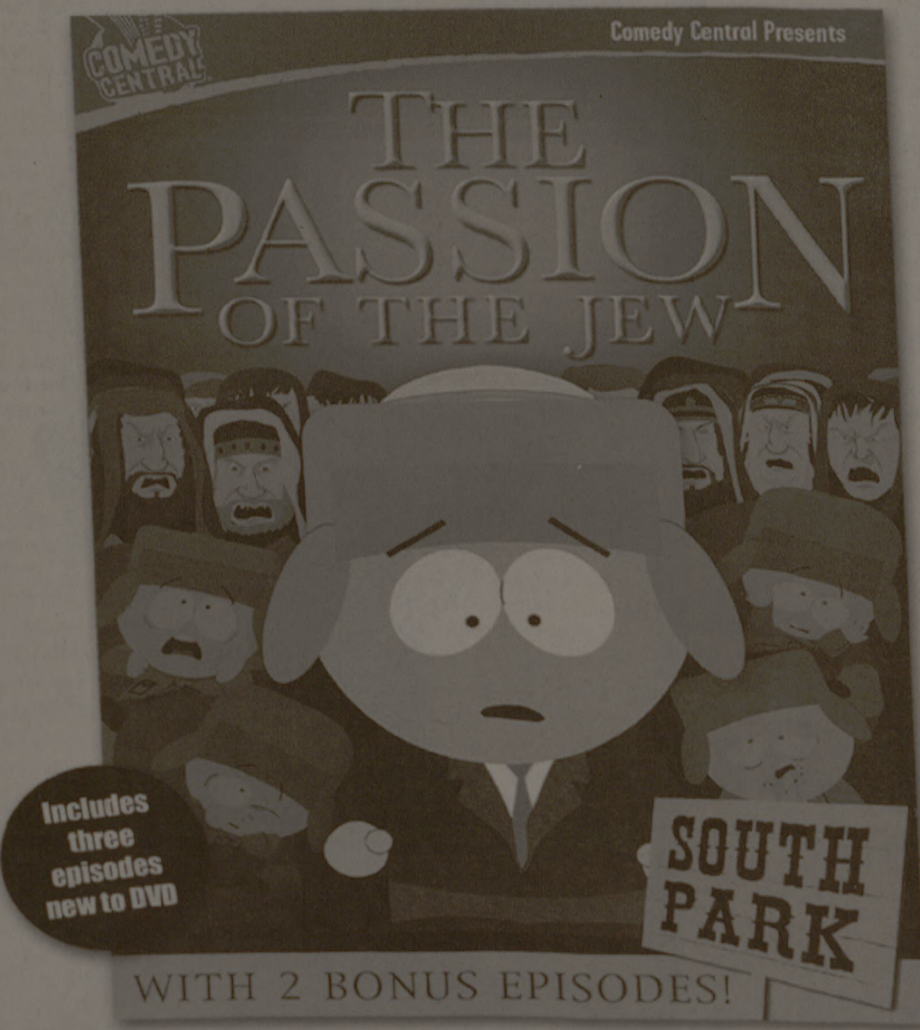
Usher won his first moonman as he took best male video for the single "Yeah!" Later, he took a dig at Justin Timberlake, who has been touted as his rival.

"I guess there ain't really any competition between me and Justin no more, right?" he said as he picked up his second award of the night for best dance video.

As usual, the awards were an afterthought to explosive performances and surprise cameos.

Alicia Keys gave a dramatic, soulful appearance, of her hit "If I Ain't Got You," and was buoyed by Stevie Wonder on harmonica. Moments later, she joined Wonder and Lenny Kravitz as they sang a classic Wonder hit, "Higher Ground."

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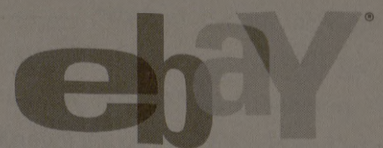
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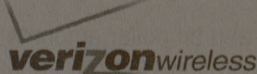
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