



## MUSIC

### The 2020 Grammy Nominations Did Wrong By Hip-Hop's Women

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NOVEMBER 22, 2019

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In 2018, Cardi B made history as the first woman to win a **Best Rap Album Grammy Award**, a significant moment in hip-hop history for **female rappers**, who are often subjected to misogynistic discrimination from their male counterparts in the industry. It was a win that honored the godmothers of female rap – **Queen Latifah**, **Missy Elliot**, **Da Brat**, MC Lyte, and **Lil Kim** who fought to be respected in the same fashion as male rappers.

However, the vast majority of **nominated rappers** in rap categories for the 62nd Grammy Awards are men. **This year's nominations** reflected the gender disparities of hip-hop, displayed by Lizzo's status as the only woman rapper nominated for an honor at the 62nd Grammy Awards. While she garnered the **most nominations this year** overall, she isn't nominated for any rap awards.

**Women in rap** are the pioneers of the genre's innovation and more than worthy of being valued. Unfortunately, the Grammy Awards are an institution that has often **overlooked or exploited Black entertainers** and their cultural productions for white capitalist profits. To quote **Megan Thee**

**Stallion**, overlooked nominee for Best New Artist, “F\*ck all them critics, and f\*ck how they feel / I’m getting money, it is what it is.”

It’s a shame that Lil Nas X and Lizzo are **hip-hop’s only representation** in the top four categories at the 2020 Grammys, along with Swae Lee and Post Malone, but their *Spider-Man* soundtrack standout “Sunflower” has even less rap on that song than in either Lizzo or Lil Nas’ respective hits. This stands out particularly in a year where women rappers **dominated the charts** with crossover successes like Megan Thee Stallion (“**Hot Girl Summer**“) and Saweetie (“**My Type**“). **Rico Nasty**, **Doja Cat**, and **City Girls** performed on late-night TV, at award shows, and at music festivals across the world due to their multi-genre talents and pop appeal. Their respective trademarks of “RICO!!” “Periodt,” “ICY,” “Hottie,” “My Type,” and “Mooo!” were incorporated into everyday vernacular. Their influence was universal in 2019.

Meanwhile, **Rapsody**, who was already on The Recording Academy’s radar after being **nominated in 2018** for her album *Laila’s Wisdom*, released *Eve*, a musical homage to the Black women who inspired her, garnering even more critical acclaim. Yet she was absent from nominations in the big four and genre categories; compare her reception to that of **7** by Lil Nas X, which received mixed reviews but also received an Album Of The Year nomination.

For decades, the Grammys have abused hip-hop, despite its status as the nation’s **most popular genre**. Hip-hop is one of the most powerful forces Black communities have to **impact cultural and societal change** due to its vast demographic appeal and worldwide influence. In 2018 hip-hop

**Societal change**, due to its vast demographic appeal and worldwide influence. In 2016, hip-hop dethroned rock as the most popular genre in the United States, according to **Nielsen**. According to the **International Federation of the Phonographic Industry**, “Over 20% of 16 – 24s in South Africa, Russia, Poland, and Germany say hip-hop/rap is their favorite genre.” “Hot Girl Summer” and “Periodt”, hip-hop rhetoric created by Megan Thee Stallion and City Girls, was **appropriated by corporations** and implemented into their marketing approaches to increase profits. Nielsen **also pointed out** that, “Black consumers’ brand preferences are increasingly becoming mainstream choices, which illustrates that the investment in connecting with Black consumers can often yield sizeable general market returns.”

As the genre integrated itself into the digital age, viral dances such as “Crank That”, “Walk It Out”, “Milly Rock”, “Hot N\*gga”, and “Teach Me How to Dougie” spread throughout YouTube, Instagram, and Vine. Another generation of young people of color from the hood found success on *Billboard*, acquired record deals, and changed pop culture. Despite lacking the needed infrastructure to maintain their sustainability, they still cemented their place as a sub-genre in hip-hop and laid the foundation for “**SoundCloud rappers**” like 2017 Grammy winner **Chance The Rapper**.

As millennial-centered social media platforms grew into household staples, **Generation Z rappers** such as Doja Cat and Lil Nas X used YouTube and TikTok to go viral for their respective singles “**Mooo!**” and “**Old Town Road**.” However, this emergent generation of viral rappers have inherited the stereotype of “meme rappers” and get overlooked in musical conversations, even though Chance’s win ushered an institutional change for the Grammys which updated their nomination

rules in 2017 to accommodate his “mixtape” *Coloring Book*. Now, acts like **Tierra Whack** can receive nominations for work like her 15-minute EP *Whack World*, which she did in 2018.

That such strides have been made so recently makes it doubly disappointing that no women were nominated for the 2020 Grammy Awards, especially since so many more women are charting than ever before. Neil Portnow, former president of The Recording Academy, **said in 2018**, “Women who have the creativity in their hearts and souls, who want to be musicians, who want to be engineers, producers, and want to be part of the industry on the executive level...[They need] to step up because I think they would be welcome.” It doesn’t feel like they are welcome just two years later.

For decades, female rappers have stepped up, only to be dismissed by men in positions of power. It’s time for the glass ceiling to be removed from over this generation of Black female rappers. It’s time for the Grammys to break away from their “crabs in a barrel” mentality and nominate more than one woman rapper across the top four and rap categories. Female rappers aren’t a monolith and the Grammys need to acknowledge that or they will continue to miss out on a wealth of amazing talent.

*Some of the artists mentioned are Warner Music artists. Uproxx is an independent subsidiary of Warner Music Group.*

