

Popular hip-hop artist Kendrick Lamar wins Pulitzer Prize for music

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Musician and rapper Kendrick Lamar (center) won the Pulitzer Prize for music for his album "Damn." Photo by: Chris Pizzello/Invision/AP, File

NEW YORK, New York — In a historical win, Kendrick Lamar won the Pulitzer Prize for music on Monday, April 16. He is the first non-classical or jazz artist to win the famed prize.

The rapper is also the most successful musician to receive the award. The prize usually goes to praised classical acts. They perform at a high level but don't have a large popular following.

The album that won him the Pulitzer also won Grammy Awards. The raw and strong album is called "DAMN." The Pulitzer board said the song collection offers images that capture the complexity of modern African-American life. He will win \$15,000.

Lamar is 30 years old. He has been praised for the lyrics of his songs and his politically charged live shows. Fans and music critics enjoy his mix of hip-hop, spoken word, jazz, soul, funk, poetry and African sounds. His 2011 album "Section.80" announced his start in the music scene. Since then, he has had the perfect blend of popularity, sales and critical respect.

Lamar's Music Tops The Charts

The Pulitzer board has awarded special honors to musicians Bob Dylan, Duke Ellington and others. However, a popular figure like Lamar has never won the prize for music. In 1997, Wynton Marsalis became the first jazz act to win the Pulitzer for music.

That makes Lamar's win more important. His albums, including "good kid, m.A.A.d city" and "DAMN.," became works of art. Each one sold more than a million copies. Lamar wrote songs about blackness, street life, survival and self-worth. His sharp raps helped him become the voice of the generation. He became the leader in hip-hop and crossed over to audiences outside of rap, from rock and pop to jazz.

He's also been a leader on the music charts. He has had more than 12 Top 40 hits. One was a No. 1 song called "Humble." He has worked with performers including U2, Taylor Swift, Rihanna and Beyoncé.

His songs like "Alright" and "The Blacker the Berry" have become part of a movement. They have given a voice to the feelings of communities of color after police shootings of minorities and race relations lead news headlines. Lamar brought some seriousness to the 2015 BET Awards. He performed a rap on top of a police car with an American flag waving behind him.

At the 2016 Grammys, he gave a show-stopping performance. He appeared beaten, in handcuffs, with chains around his hands and bruises on his eyes as he performed.

A Dozen Grammys Under His Belt

Lamar's musical success helped him win 12 Grammy Awards. However, all three of his major-label albums have lost in the top section, album of the year. Each loss has been criticized by the music community. The Grammy results started a conversation about how its Recording Academy might be out of touch with what people actually like. "DAMN." lost album of the year to Bruno Mars' "24K Magic" in January.

The rapper was born in Compton, California. He was picked by "Black Panther" movie director Ryan Coogler to put together an album to go with the successful film. It gave Lamar another No. 1 effort and highly praised project.

"DAMN.," released in April 2017, won five Grammy Awards. One was best rap album. It also made the top of year-end lists from NPR, Rolling Stone and BBC News.

There were two other finalists for the Pulitzer Prize in music. One was Michael Gilbertson's "Quartet," which premiered in February 2017 at Carnegie Hall. The other was Ted Hearne's "Sound from the Bench." His was a 35-minute song collection released in March 2017.

Du Yun won the music Pulitzer last year for her opera "Angel's Bone." She said she was thrilled about Lamar's win.

His work got her blood pumping, she said. One of his videos made her want to make the music she's making now, she added. "Freedom of expression is the height of art," and Lamar shows that freedom, she said.

Quiz

- 1 Which statement from the article would be MOST important to include in a summary of the article?
- (A) The rapper is also the most successful musician to receive the award. The prize usually goes to praised classical acts.
 - (B) Fans and music critics enjoy his mix of hip-hop, spoken word, jazz, soul, funk, poetry and African sounds.
 - (C) The Pulitzer board has awarded special honors to musicians Bob Dylan, Duke Ellington and others.
 - (D) The Grammy results started a conversation about how its Recording Academy might be out of touch with what people actually like.
- 2 One MAIN idea of the article is that Lamar is the first popular artist to win the Pulitzer Prize. What is another MAIN idea of the article?
- (A) Lamar lost album of the year to Bruno Mars.
 - (B) Lamar has won 12 Grammy awards.
 - (C) Lamar's songs focus on serious issues.
 - (D) Lamar's most recent album is titled "DAMN."
- 3 What effect does Lamar's music have on audiences?
- (A) Lamar's music is extremely catchy and exciting for listeners.
 - (B) Lamar's music shows different communities how to get along.
 - (C) Lamar's music influences many young people to become artists.
 - (D) Lamar's music provides a voice to underrepresented groups.
- 4 What is the relationship between Lamar and "Black Panther"?
- (A) Lamar put music together for the film.
 - (B) Lamar acted as a character in the film.
 - (C) Lamar won \$15,000 for his work on the film.
 - (D) Lamar helped to direct the film.