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### Grammy 2011 rehearsals: Dr. Dre, Arcade Fire and the 10 potential make-or-break performance moments

February 12, 2011 | 8:19 am  (85)  (40)  Comments (9)

*In the days leading up to Sunday's Grammy Awards, which Pop & Hiss will be covering live, this blog will tackle various Grammy artists, personalities, categories and just plain oddities. For even more Grammy info, check [Awards Tracker](#) and [The Envelope](#).*



There's plenty of suspense sealed up in the envelopes at the 53rd annual Grammy Awards, but the true winners and losers on Sunday night will be determined during the performances — the show's global stage can create a pivot point in the life of an artist.

"To perform at the Grammys is a relief because you know you've finally made it to the summit after running so hard, so fast and so long," said will.i.am of the Black Eyed Peas as he watched rehearsals on Thursday at Staples Center. "But then there's a whole new set of anxieties: 'I hope my performance goes off well, this is going to define me as an artist and a performer.'"

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The Peas aren't on this year's show — the six-time Grammy winners had their world-is-watching moment last weekend at the Super Bowl halftime show — so they can sit back and watch other acts look for the risk and reward of plugging into the amplifier of pop culture during the CBS broadcast. There are plenty of storylines to keep track of this year, here's a look at some burning questions that follow some key performers into the glare of this year's Grammy spotlight.

**Will Rihanna call in sick?** The singer has been fighting a nasty flu bug and there's been considerable anxiety that she might not be ready for her microphone moment — which would only qualify as the second-worst Grammy weekend of her life considering her horrific 2009 night when she was assaulted by then-boyfriend Chris Brown on the eve of the show. On Friday, though, she soldiered through her (literally) fiery performance of "What's My Name" with Drake and looked determined beneath an especially impressive explosion of red curls.



**Does Christina Aguilera know the words to "Respect"?** OK, that's a bit harsh but Aguilera is on the spot after flubbing a line in "The Star Spangled Banner" last week at the Super Bowl. On Sunday night she is part of a diva brigade (Yolanda Adams, Jennifer Hudson, Martina McBride and Florence Welch) that will open the show with a medley tribute to Aretha Franklin. At Thursday night rehearsals, Aguilera nailed every word and melismatic note on her very first run-through (we're not saying which song she sang, but it's not "Respect," just for the record) and without teleprompter assist.

**Could anyone ever really forget about Dre?** There's some major mojo going on this year with first-time Grammy performer Mick Jagger on the schedule as well as a relatively rare Grammy appearance by Bob Dylan and his mandolin. But at rehearsals there was no performer stirring more interest than hip-hop elder Dr. Dre, who hasn't performed on live television in more than a decade. "That's the one," said Jimmy Jam, who dropped by rehearsals on Thursday. "It's also a sign that Dre is actually going to put an album out. It's a chance for the world to say to him, 'OK Dre, you up? Let's do this.'"

**Will Miranda Lambert regret her lack of pyro?** The country singer-songwriter admits her impulse was to "rock out" during her performance but she is wisely going a different route for "The House That Built Me," which is nominated for song of the year. "I'm sure there are a ton of people who don't know who I am and who have never heard this song," she said, [but] this song didn't need a lot of bells and whistles... I wanted to showcase what the song means to me and have pictures of a lot of the people who built this industry over time in the houses that built them. I think it's better this way and I'm very excited to perform it."

**How will Cee Lo Green bring a song to network television whose original title is unprintable in a family newspaper?** With Muppets, naturally. Well, Muppet cousins anyway. "We asked around about the availability of the Muppets," Green said Friday, "but we kind of missed connecting with the Disney people [who own the rights to the original Muppets]. And then we ran out of time. So we won't have Kermie and Miss Piggy." Cee Lo will instead perform with Jim Henson Company puppets. (We suspect that Disney is just fine with missing that phone call, by the way.)

**Will the Grammy give Arcade Fire a mainstream break?** The indie rock collective

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**GerrickKennedy** K, lemme leave the Staples Center... 7 hours ago · reply

**Will the Grammys give Arcade Fire a mainstream spark?** The indie-rock collective delivered a roof-raising rehearsal Thursday that channeled the youthful spirit of their critically acclaimed album, "The Suburbs," — and there's some highflying production touches that will add some unexpected kinetic energy to the staging. The band seemed enthused about the integrity of the show's team, led by executive producer Ken Ehrlich but they still have punk souls — they blanched at the suggestion that they talk to a TV crew that was looking for chipper promotional sound bites.

**Will Barbra Streisand ever relax?** The notorious perfectionist lived up to her reputation by shutting down the Staples Center during her rehearsal on Thursday, and her camp said that for her stage time at the MusiCares fundraiser dinner on Friday night that news photographers would be escorted out. We are all allowed to watch during the CBS broadcast though, right?



**Can Esperanza Spalding carry the jazz world on her shoulders?** The Portland, Ore., singer and bassist is the lone jazz performer booked on a show jammed with pop, country, hip-hop and rock. She was sanguine about the singular pressure. "If you want to feel burdened you can always find someone's expectation to respond to," Spalding said at Thursday rehearsals. "B.B. King once said 'You can't serve two masters,' and to me, that means you have to decide if music is something that expresses that inner voice and the divine connection that is music, or that it's something created to meet other people's expectations. I've chosen the path of serving that muse, and for me that's the most fulfilling way to go. But as long as people keep inviting me to events like this, I'll keep coming."

-- Randy Lewis and Geoff Boucher

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*Photos: Arcade Fire rehearse for the Grammy Awards; A look at Grammy seating arrangements; Jazz nominee Esperanza Spalding at Grammy rehearsals. Credits: Luis Sinco / Los Angeles Times*



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Too bad the Grammy's has been as irrelevant as most new music for over 15 years now. It's a fashion plate, evidence of new technology and it appeals to people under 25 years of age. Some of the us older folk will watch periodically but there won't be any special moments for us. Sad to say that music just isn't important enough to that demographic of under 25's for the show to mean anything to them,

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EVERYONE, including all Staples Center employees, had to clear out at the Staples Center for Barbra Streisand's rehearsal!! -- Amazing!! Still such a Prima Donna.

Posted by: **Thomas Byrnes** | February 13, 2011 at 11:05 PM

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