VMAs 2026

1. One moment when Snoop Dogg connected with the Gen Z audience was when he roasted Madonna. Obviously, it was a joke and a fun Snoop Dogg quip with his line, “She ain’t a virgin no more.” The joke seemed to connect as it soon went viral with people clipping it on X and finding it funny. However, he soon lost Gen Z with a poorly done “Deez nuts” knock-knock joke. Many found it unfunny and frankly cringe, making a joke on a meme that died a decade ago.

   The difference comes from relevancy and authenticity. The Madonna joke felt like a reaction to the performance the audience just saw, a pun on her song, and a fun bit between two icons in the music industry. The deez nuts joke felt old, cringe, and out of nowhere. It read as something a dad would say to try to connect with his kids and was obviously scripted.

2. I feel he was the right choice for the brand MTV wants to be now. I don’t think that brand is working for them, but they got what they wanted. The VMAs used to be a more edgy award show. More bombastic, more drama, more entertainment. However, it is very much trying to go into the family-friendly territory and not make noise. The Snoop that showed up was family-friendly. Too family-friendly, I would say, for the VMAs. After the initial opening monologue, he felt watered down and boring. It was the right choice for the West Coast reunion, and he’s such a big icon. He fits with the shift MTV wants for the VMA’s; I just thought it was boring.

3. The Nirvana Video Vanguard Award was a segment aimed at older viewers. Billboard noted that Madonna, Snoop, and Nirvana all have strong appeal to an older demographic. For Gen Z, the George Michael tribute seemed to be a segment for them. It handed a

legacy catalog to younger artists. However, once again, it missed the mark of actually resonating with Gen Z. Especially with the inclusion of Sombr, a singer whose songs blew up on TikTok, yes, but who is known for being a “cringe” figure in most of the eyes of Gen Z and this performance didn’t help that. Because of this, the show favored the older audiences.

4. The PR narrative they were trying to spin was that MTV originated music videos and still has a place in the future. The night leaned heavily on nostalgia, specifically the 90s. They had legacy artists perform alongside new-age artists. Madonna brought on Sabrina Carpenter and Charli XCX. The George Michael tribute brought in Sombr and Adam Lambert. However, and it may feel like a broken record, it didn’t land the way the brand wanted it to. While the Madonna performance was the strongest, the rest felt like a desperate reach to get Gen Z's attention and stay relevant. The choices made for the Gen Z audience felt like an older uncle trying to connect with his young nieces and prove he is still hip and cool. These attempts at trying to make MTV relevant to modern audiences just further pushed it back into something that felt dated overall.
5. The most popular moment was, hands down, Madonna's opener. This was her first VMAs performance in 23 years, and the broadcast peaked at 15 million viewers during the number (Porter, 2026). The whole performance was planned and perfectly calculated, with callbacks to her 2003 performance, guest performers, and references to her most iconic moments.

   Madonna benefited the most from her performance by getting her name back into the cultural conversation and setting the stage for her numerous wins throughout the night.

The second would be Sabrina Carpenter, with her continued insertion into performances with cultural icons in the music industry, keeping her name in every conversation.

6. One performer with a big PR story is Taylor Swift's filmmaker story. She received the first-ever VMAs Artist Director Honors, and the show then premiered her self-directed "Patient Zero" video starring Colin Farrell and Dakota Johnson, timed to her deluxe album, which was released Sept. 25. She also won video of the year for "The Fate of Ophelia." The premiere supported her shift into trying to be recognized for her work not just in front of the camera, but behind it as a writer and director. It shifted the conversation away from the rough reception of "The Encore" into the artistry of the videos and her new passion. A smart shift and reframe for the night.
7. They created social moments with short quips and surprise reveals laid throughout the night for clippable, easy shareability. Madonna's opener worked best, again, because it had several surprise moments in a row, and each one could become its own post. The reveals also reached several fan bases at once. Carpenter appeared, then Charli XCX walked out tossing a cigarette, and dancers appeared dressed as Madonna's past eras. One performance gave Madonna, Carpenter, and Charli XCX fans something to share, so fans did the distribution for MTV.
8. Bacardí presented Best Dance, which went to Madonna. That felt natural, as alcoholic beverages, specifically Bacardí, are attached to dance music, nightclubs, and parties. The integration mostly helps Bacardí by association with nightlife and an iconic artist.
   In contrast, The General Insurance presented Best New Artist, which felt weirdly forced. An insurance brand has nothing to do with any theme of the night and was frankly just

forgettable and didn't stick with anyone. I don't think it affected the brand anyway, if anything it leaves a bad taste for MTV if anything.

9. One thing that kept getting brought up was the seeming confusion Madonna had at each speech for each award she got. At one point when winning the Best Dance award, she even asked, "What is this for, again?" Charli XCX then reopened the winner's card to remind her which category she had won. The unusual exchange immediately sparked discussion online, along with her disjointed speeches that didn't seem rehearsed, and some even accused her of slurring. Her team should not issue a statement, because that would draw more attention to the moment and blow it up when it has already died down. Instead, they should keep attention on the seven wins.
10. I would give the PR a 5/10. It was average. Although on paper, it was the most-watched VMAs since 2015, up 51% from last year (Schnieder, 2026). But the growth is mostly from nostalgia-baiting rather than building up new cultural stories. Much of the audience came from an NFL lead-in and a legacy star. The PR is good for an older audience, but a complete fail for Gen Z. After the opener, there was no pull for Gen Z; all the moments they tried flopped and came off as just strange or straight cringe-worthy. MTV proved it can still draw a crowd, but it hasn't proved that Gen Z sees the VMAs as their show and not their parents'.

Emmy's 2026

Introduction

The 78th Primetime Emmy Awards took place on September 14, 2026, at the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles, with Mariska Hargitay of *Law and Order: SVU hosting*. Hargitay marked the first time the Emmys had a female host in 15 years, quipping that Tina Fey and Amy Poehler were busy. Throughout the night, Hargitay had a variety of outfits and hairstyle changes, which

translated not only to PR in the moment, but also a second wave of PR past the broadcast with behind-the-scenes of how they did it all.

Red Carpet

NBC's official TikTok page held a pre-show livestream featuring influencers Trisha Paytas and Nicky Campbell, an interesting move that NBC has been doing, trying to gain younger generations' viewership for the program since younger generations are watching full award shows less and less. The two biggest red carpet moments had two very opposite receptions and effects. One had to do with *Hacks* star Meg Stalter arriving on the red carpet dressed as a literal Emmy statuette, a very comedic moment that matched her nomination for the comedy show. This was praised for her comedy and her continuation of bold red carpet statements that she is known for. This, along with her other bold red carpet looks, brings a lot of attention and PR for her. It frames her as someone who breaks the mold, is bold, and unapologetic, leaving everyone wanting to know what she is going to wear next and her thought process behind it. On the other hand, there was undoubtedly the worst look of the night, which was Shailene Woodley. With everything mismatched, her outfit was talked about the most after the Emmys, with audiences appalled at the look. This feels like a PR stunt in itself. As they say, any publicity is good publicity. To go with a bold look that you know will cause discourse is a way to get people to talk about you, whether the look is amazing or, in this case, terrible.

The Awards

The show started with a pre-recorded sketch with Taylor Swift on the actual SVU set. This was a nod to her being at the Chiefs game that was airing at the same time as the Emmys that Taylor Swift was at. A smart PR strategy that turned the rival events' ratings into a funny viral moment.

A big moment of the night was Stephen Colbert's Late Night show winning Outstanding Variety Series in its last season, despite being canceled due to ongoing political pressure earlier in the year. An important thing to note was that during his speech, there was no mention of Trump. He instead chose to thank the over 200 crew who worked on the program for more than 11 years and highlight the importance of late-night television. PR wise the whole night was surprisingly not very political, though there were some comments; it was decidedly less talked about than other times. From the PR narrative, Colbert took the high road. Instead of dredging up the Trump drama and making slights, he chose wisely to take the time to thank those behind the scenes who helped him, furthering the positive sentiment and PR around Colbert as a voice

for freedom of the press and labor in the entertainment industry. A decidedly smart and effective way to be bipartisan in highlighting the importance of late-night media for everyone, no matter the political affiliation.

The night was pretty strange in the way it was set up, with most of the awards all being packed into the first half of the show, while the second half was reserved for memorials and other moments. The Emmys have been taking away more of the awards presented and moving them over to the Creative Arts Emmys over the years, giving more time for skits, memorials, and, in this Emmy's case, musical numbers. While the format might be questionable, this year's memorial is not. Losing such amazing talent called for a grand memorial, and the Emmys gave that. Bringing up the biggest losses of the year, fellow friends and co-stars added an extra layer of tear-jerking sentiment. The memorial was beautiful, and definitely one of the most talked-about events, bringing respect for the award show up. Reba performing for Dolly, Catherine O'Hara's on-screen children speech, as well as Jamie Lee Curtis giving tribute to Rob Reiner with Noah Kahan's stunning performance of "Bridge Over Troubled Water." Seeing as people were definitely watching to see what the Emmys would pull out for these star-studded talents passing by, they definitely delivered PR wise.

Another tear-jerking moment was Michael J. Fox's acceptance of the Bob Hope Humanitarian Award, which combined the honor and advocacy. In the speech, he talked about his ongoing struggle with Prkinson's nd his reluctance to talk about it, but thanked everyone for the continued support, creating another powerful PR moment that many talked about and praised, with an honor award being presented for those who have made Hollywood what it is today.

Dominant Storylines and Post Coverage

The most dominant storylines revolved around television's staying power and history. The history of those who built TV to where it is today was highlighted through powerful memorials, honors, and farewells to long-running shows such as Colbert's Late Show. But it was also shaped by paving history and breaking records once again. *Widow's Bay* won 14 Emmys, breaking *The Studio's* previous comedy record of 13; Matthew Rhys became the first actor to win two lead acting Emmys in one night; Jean Smart won for every season of *Hacks*, tying the record of eight career Emmys; and Hiro Murai became the first Asian director to win for comedy directing. These records and historical send-offs made for perfect headlines that were shared quickly after the show.

One thing to note, however, is the ratings of the broadcast. Final same-day ratings were 6.8 million viewers, down about 10 percent from last year. The Emmys are not alone in this, though, as other award shows are seeing the same drop in views. The 2026 Academy Awards marked a 9% decline; the 2026 Grammy Awards had a 6% drop, and the Golden Globes dropped 7%. This is partly due to younger generations using clips and social media to get news, part of why NBC's TikTok does the pre-show and why many outlets are focusing on getting short clips to share on socials. Because of this, the way NBCU reported the number was different, citing the show as the most-watched Monday entertainment telecast of 2026 and citing 133M social video views, up 90 percent.

A negative that seems to follow every award show nowadays is the cringe and misses that come with trying to relate and pull in younger audiences. Much of the humor and sketches simply came off as cringe and unrelatable to younger audiences, turning them off even more to award shows. The biggest showcase of this at the Emmys was Rachel Sennott and Odessa A'zion's bit that fell on a room of silence. Many made fun of it and its attempt at Gen Z humor and touted it as the most awkward bit of the night.

Conclusion

Overall, this year's Emmys felt the same as it always does. Forced and slightly cinge segments, sprinkled in with some hits. The memorial and tributes this year felt like the only saving grace to an otherwise non-notable award show. People love watching shows and movies, but when it comes to the awards celebrating them, many tune out due to the repetiveness nd the overall lack of relatability. Although they try, the more spectacular and funny they try to be to gain younger audiences, the more those audiences feel turned off. The award show works for the older generations who like that humor or followed along in Stephen Colbert's career, but if award shows keep playing it safe, they will continue to die. In closing, it had its moments, but it was safe and boring in the end.