



RECUERDOS: 20 GREATEST LATIN GRAMMYS MOMENTS OVER 20 YEARS

For two decades, the Biggest Night in Latin Music has witnessed a myriad of unforgettable scenes that have gone down in both television and Latin music history. From norteño and rock legends delivering bold statements to unlikely acts making music magic, here are the 20 most epic performances at the Latin Grammys.

by ISABELA RAYGOZA



▲ **Ricky Martin, Celia Cruz and Gloria Estefan pay homage To Tito Puente (Staples Center, Los Angeles, 2000):** During the inaugural Latin Grammy ceremony, Puerto Rican millennium breakout star Ricky Martin teams up with Cuban-American icon Gloria Estefan and the Queen of Salsa Celia Cruz for a rare yet memorable performance. Honoring Tito Puente, the Fania All-Star legend and pioneer of Afro-Latin jazz who passed away in 2000, the trio of icons deliver a tropical storm of his hits like “Quimbara,” “Oriente” and “Oye Como Va.” The latter hit from 1962 became immortalized by Santana’s 1971 rendition.

▶ **Santana and Maná’s double threat (Staples Center, Los Angeles, 2000):** The guitar virtuoso is joined by the Mexican pop-rock idols for an electric performance of the 2000 Latin Grammy Record of the Year song “Corazón Espinado.” The riveting showcase saw the then-53-year-old Woodstock icon pierce through bursting flares of guitar fretwork that paired well with Maná’s knack for sun-soaked tropical rock. The riveting lovelorn song, which picked up another Latin Grammy win for Best Rock Performance by a Duo or Group, has become a Latin rock classic for both groups.



▲ **Shakira plays with fire (Staples Center, Los Angeles, 2000):** Through her sizzling belly-dancing and hypnotic yodel, the Colombian singer ignites the stage with “Ojos Así” at the inaugural Latin Grammy ceremony. Donning a slinky red bodysuit and a newly-bleached mane, the crossover pop-rocker hypnotized the audience with her fierce, languid moves that nod to Middle Eastern folk tradition amid a ring of fire. The chart-topping track has remained a concert staple for the Latin pop powerhouse ever since.



◀ **Latin music all-stars remember Celia Cruz (American Airlines Arena, Miami, 2003):** A star-studded performance by Gloria Estefan, Willie Colón, Marc Anthony, Oscar Leon, Johnny Pacheco and others unite to honor the legacy of the Queen of Salsa, Celia Cruz, who passed away in 2003. Marc Anthony opened up the medley, bursting onto the stage as he belted out her iconic festive song “La Vida Es Un Carnaval.” Eventually, the tropical-pop star passed the mic as other genre-key players continued the potpourri with hits, like the all-time Latin pop staple of “La Negra Tiene Tumbao” – a Cuban party track with an urban spin that went on to become one of the “Greatest Latin Pop Songs of All Time” according to *Rolling Stone*.

▶ **Marco Antonio Solís’ soaring pipes (Shrine Auditorium, Los Angeles, 2004):** Armed with an impressive vocal range that can turn any love skeptic into a hopeless romantic, the Mexican crooner steals the night away with a chilling delivery of “Más Que Tu Amigo.” Flanked by a troupe of salsa dancers, the Bukis alum brightens the scene with his signature Casanova-esque swagger as he struts across the stage with charisma. That same year, the song peaked at No. 1 on the Hot Latin Songs charts.



◀ **Alejandro and Vicente Fernández captivate hearts (Kodak Theatre, Los Angeles, 2002):** The King of Ranchera Music, Vicente Fernández, passes the torch to his son Latin pop crooner Alejandro Fernández on stage in an unforgettable duet. During the emotional-filled performance of the hits “Acá Entre Nos” and “Tantita Pena,” viewers saw the younger Fernández assume the role of an artist true to the tradition of Mexican vintage ballads.



2005

▲ **La Ley's magnetic performance** (Shrine Auditorium, Los Angeles, 2005): Beto Cuevas' seductive baritone backed by the band's commanding delivery of their greatest hits medley sends the audience into an electrifying whirlwind.



2006

◀ **Alejandro Sanz and Shakira's steamy duet** (Madison Square Garden, New York, 2006):

Spanish pop crooner Alejandro Sanz arrives to the stage with his electric guitar and delivers the jaunty, salacious rhythm of "La Tortura." Shakira then appears, strutting toward the centerfold, captivating the crowd with her iconic hip-gyrating motions as the pair sing about tortured love. Teasing and flirting with the crowd, the twosome testified their undeniable on-stage music chemistry and they were recognized with two of the most coveted Latin Grammy wins – Record of the Year and Song of the Year.

▼ **Along with Blue Man Group, Ricky Martin makes a grand opening** (Mandalay Events Center, Las Vegas, 2007): The outlandish trio of mavericks set the stage for the singer's invigorating showcase. With the Blue Man Group's exhilarating prowess for party-starting percussion, they provide the tropical-fueled ambiance that welcomes Ricky Martin to the main floor. The Puerto Rican pop icon then intrigues the audience with his signature hip-swiveling allure as he keeps the vibe lit with "Lola, Lola." The heartthrob follows up with the chart-topping "La Bomba" as he elevates the rhythms of salsa, murga, and tribal drumming to Latin pop galore.



2007

▼ **Latin American folk collision** (Toyota Center, Houston, 2008): Vallenato meets mariachi thanks to a virtuosic performance by Jorge Celedón and Mariachi Sol de México. The Colombian folk revivalist pairs his voice alongside jubilant accordion riffs. Shortly after, a troupe of Mexican folkloric dancers arrive to accompany the singer that leads to the mariachi ensemble's grand entrance. Together, the two groups combine their rootsy styles to create a fusion that cross-pollinates to the excitement of everyone in attendance.



2008



2009

▲ **Juan Gabriel proves his unstoppable Latin pop mastery** (Mandalay Events Center, Las Vegas, 2009): For an epic 37 minutes, Mexican legend Juan Gabriel spanned the hits of his prolific four-decade career. His soaring and gut-wrenching vocals pulled and tugged at the heartstrings throughout, as he is backed by a sweeping orchestra and a staunch mariachi troupe. In 2009, the Latin Recording Academy honored him as Person of the Year, and he made an equally huge splash when he broke the record for the longest performance in television history to ever broadcast the ceremony, with no commercial breaks.



2010

▲ **A heartrending rendition sparks joy** (Mandalay Events Center, Las Vegas, 2010): Spanish crooner José Luis Perales delightfully surprises salsa revivalist Marc Anthony and viewers in a heart-melting duet of "Y Cómo Es Él."



2011

▲ **Latinoamérica resiste** (Mandalay Events Center, Las Vegas, 2011): Accompanied by the Venezuelan Symphony Orchestra, Puerto Rican duo Calle 13 pays endearing respect to the working class heroes of Latin America. The anthemic roots-urbano song – which stars folk legends Susana Baca from Peru, Brazil's Maria Rita, and Totó la Momposina from Colombia in the song's recording – features the soaring vocals of Ileana Mercedes Cabra Joglar, better known as iLe of PG-13, the sister and frequent collaborator of Calle 13, on their 2011 Latin Grammy performance. Raw, irreverent, and open-hearted, this beautiful ode has gone down in the books as one of the most touching tributes to the Hispanophone and Lusophone territories.



▲ **Blue Man Group ushers in a sertanejo star (Mandalay Events Center, Las Vegas, 2012):** The Brazilian countrified pop that is sertanejo arrives to national Hispanic-American TV when Michel Teló took his Latin Grammy-nominated smasher “Ai Se Eu Te Pego” to the main stage during the 2012 telecast. Ushered into the limelight by the eccentric blue-painted showman group, the rustic pop singer pleases the crowd as he belts out the Portuguese song with plenty of fervor and passion.



▲ **A carnivalesque bachata venture (Mandalay Events Center, Las Vegas, 2013):** When Dominican-American singer Leslie Grace walked onto the stage at the 2013 Latin Grammys, she instantly captured hearts with her ever-so-sweet rendition of oldie-but-goodie “Be My Baby.” She gracefully transitioned the song – which appears in her 2013 Latin Grammy-nominated eponymous album – into a bachata wonderland as Cirque du Soleil acrobats surrounded her for an extraordinary showcase.



▲ **J Balvin reveals his balladeer side (MGM Grand Garden Arena, Las Vegas, 2014):** J Balvin rose to worldwide prominence with his global hit “Ginza” in 2015, the single that earned him a Guinness World Record for the longest stay on the *Billboard* charts at No. 1. Just a year prior, the Colombian reggaetonero showed a rare essential side to him with an acoustic guitar lullaby version of “Ay Vamos,” revealing his affinity for stripped-down ballads. Though it didn’t take long for the then-breakout urbano star to convert this hit into the reggaeton banger we all know today.



▲ **Maná and Los Tigres Del Norte confront xenophobia (MGM Grand Garden Arena, Las Vegas, 2015):** Through their rock-encrusted cover jam “Somos Más Americanos,” Maná pulls, arguably, the boldest political action during the telecast. Soon joined by the original composers of the song, legendary norteños Los Tigres del Norte, the two Mexican power bands stand up against racism. Like embattled musicians ready for war, the performers finalized their riveting show by lofting a banner emblazoned with “Don’t Vote for Racists” – a courageous rebuttal to Donald Trump’s xenophobic remarks made during his 2015 presidential campaign.



▲ **Marc Anthony and JLo lock lips (T-Mobile Arena in Paradise, Las Vegas, 2016):** The once mighty power couple of Latin pop perform the ultimate kiss-off ballad – “Olvidame y pega la Vuelta” originally by Argentinian duo Pimpinela. Oozing chemistry, passion, and a whole lot of heart, the pair, who filed for divorce in 2012, create plenty of steam and tension as they surprise viewers when they sealed the track with a kiss.



▲ **Residente’s ode to Puerto Rico (MGM Grand Garden Arena, Las Vegas, 2017):** After the devastating aftermath of Hurricane María that tragically battered the island of Puerto Rico in 2017, the pedagogic rapper dedicates an eye-opening tribute to his native country with the Latin Grammy-nominated “Hijos del Cañaveral.” “Puerto Rico doesn’t just rise, it has always been awake,” avows Residente, right before he delivers the heartrending tropical-rap ode to his motherland.



▲ **Ángela Aguilar charms with a timeless folk song (MGM Grand Garden Arena, Las Vegas, 2018):** The 2018 telecast sees the 15-year-old regional Mexican musician and daughter of Pepe Aguilar spill her heart out in one of Mexico’s most beloved folk ballads, “La Llorona.” Through her mesmerizing yet haunting vocal chops, the Best New Artist nominee brings ravishing thrills and chills to the audience, thus reviving ranchera music to avant-garde grandeur.