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Predictions for the Big Four Grammy Awards

Bill Smolskis, Opinion Contributor

The Recording Academy has released their nominations for the 64th Grammy Awards, and although the public's reception is, as usual, less than neutral, the nominees still give us a view on how the industry sees itself.

The Record of the Year category includes "I Still Have Faith In You" (ABBA), "Freedom" (Jon Batiste), "I Get a Kick out of You" (Gaby, Tony Bennet), "Peaches" (Justin Bieber, Daniel Caesar, Giveon), "Right on Time" (Brandi Carlile), "Happier Than Ever" (Billie Eilish), "Montero (Call Me By Your Name)" (Lil Nas X), "Drivers License" (Olivia Rodrigo) and "Leave the Door Open" (Silk Sonic).



Luca DelCarlo

This year, the Academy continued its habit of mixing new and old artists within the nominations. Their nods to Jon Batiste, Tony Bennet, ABBA and Brandi Carlile make no sense against viral hits like "Drivers License" and "Montero." "Peaches" and "Drivers License" have the most potential. "Peaches" contains a genre crossover from three talented artists, and "Drivers License" is a solid ballad from one of this year's biggest new names.

The Album of the Year nominees are "Love for Sale" (Lady Gaga and Tony Bennet), "We Are" (Jon Batiste), "Justice" (Justin Bieber), "Planet Her" (Doja Cat), "Happier Than Ever" (Billie Eilish), "Back of My Mind" (H.E.R.), "Montero" (Lil Nas X), "Sour" (Olivia Rodrigo), "Evermore" (Taylor Swift) and "Donda" (Kanye West).

"Happier Than Ever" and "Sour" have the best chances to win because of their strong thematic concepts. Giving the gold to Taylor Swift would be too predictable after her win last year, even if "Evermore" is as lush and detailed as its predecessor. The Academy won't give "Montero" album of the year, mostly because it's a pop-rap album with a primarily young fanbase. H.E.R. could be the underdog for the second year in a row, but I don't think it stands out enough amongst such a unique group. Although "Donda" was by far the most discussed release of 2021, the turbulent rollout, controversial feature list and crushing length will prevent it from winning. In all honesty, "We Are" and "Love for Sale" doesn't stand a chance against these titanic releases.

Song of the Year nominees include "Bad Habits" (Ed Sheeran), "A Beautiful Noise" (Alicia Keys, Brandi Carlile), "Driver's License" (Olivia Rodrigo), "Fight for You" (H.E.R.), "Happier Than Ever" (Billie Eilish), "Kiss Me More" (Doja Cat, SZA) "Leave the Door Open" (Silk Sonic) "Montero (Call Me by Your Name)" (Lil Nas X), "Peaches" (Justin Bieber) and "Right on Time" (Brandi Carlile).

This category includes a wide-ranging span of genres, so it's hard to discern what will win. Once again, Olivia Rodrigo has a great chance. "Drivers License" is a very solid breakup song that everyone likes. "Leave the Door Open" is fantastic, but it feels like someone recorded it in 1976 and found it in 2021. Similar to Bruno Mars' Album of the Year win for "24K Magic," I think this would be the safe choice. "Fight for You" and "A Beautiful Noise" sound like phoned-in soundtrack singles, even though only one of them is. "Montero," "Happier Than Ever," "Kiss Me More" and "Peaches" have viral success, but will that be enough to sway members? Brandi Carlile's "Right on Time" might have a chance because it stands out among these songs.

The Academy nominated Arooj Aftab, Jimmie Allen, Baby Keem, Finneas, Glass Animals, Japanese Breakfast, The Kid Laroi, Arlo Parks, Olivia Rodrigo and Saweetie for Best New Artist.

Olivia Rodrigo is the only artist I could see winning this award. Her music is accessible, combines multiple genres, and unlike Finneas, Glass Animals, Japanese Breakfast and Saweetie, she's actually a new artist. The Kid Laroi and Baby Keem made big waves this year, but the Academy doesn't typically reward rappers with Best New Artist. Arlo Parks and Arooj Aftab made some gorgeous music this year, but I don't see how they can compete with such big names.

The Grammy's scattershot array of nominees annually angers fans. The 64th Awards' big four are no different, combining some of the year's most popular and compelling music with picks from a seemingly random lineup of artists and genres.