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2010 VMAs Live-Blog: Kanye West, Lady Gaga and more

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With shows such as “Jersey Shore” leading MTV’s ratings, the network’s continued devotion to its annual Video Music Awards — a ceremony honoring something that MTV, er, doesn’t really play any more — makes about as much sense in 2010 as MSNBC throwing Glenn Beck a two-hour tea party, but we are nevertheless tuned in and ready to watch. (In fairness, MTV.com, which does play videos, [recently topped](#) industry would-be savior Vevo as the Internet’s most popular music-centric site.) The tape-delayed fun starts right here and on [@iambrandx](#) at 9 p.m. PDT — though we reserve the right to switch over to “Mad Men” at 10 if Kanye West doesn’t do something awesome by then.

8:52 p.m.: Just turned on the pre-show. Pretty sure Pharrell wore those jeans on the cover of Nylon Guys a year ago, B.O.B.

8:54 p.m.: We’re glad people are tweeting about the VMAs so that MTV’s rent-a-VJs have something to talk about before interviewing Ke\$ha.

8:58 p.m.: Sleigh Bells in a Honda commercial! This is how indie rock bands get played on MTV in 2010.

9 p.m.: Beverage status: Open. Kanye anticipation: High. FreeCreditScore.com commercial song: Better than the new Weezer album. We’re having fun already.

9:01 p.m.: Sway presents Lady Gaga with the Moonman for Best Dance Video. Her outfit is auditioning for Angelina Jolie’s role in “Cleopatra.” Gaga starts talking about “Don’t ask, don’t tell,” Sway says, “You look great tonight.”

9:03 p.m.: Eminem opens the show with a hoodie, crazy eyes and enough drummers for a Fela Kuti tribute. Rihanna, looking like a red-headed “Like a Virgin”-era Madonna, joins him for “Love the Way You Lie.” A solid start.

9:09 p.m.: Chelsea Handler pre-taped segment. Somehow, Lindsay Lohan looks older than her *and is in this opening skit!* Handler takes the stage to the sounds of Lady Gaga in a ridiculous, architecture-themed dress. Waiting for the Gaga cutaway; no dice.

9:12 p.m.: “I am as high as a kite,” Handler says. Then calls Snoop Dogg an “angry black man.” Racist *and* confusing? Follows it up with a joke about sneaking guns into the building, which must make T.I. feel like a champ.

9:14 p.m.: The Gaga cutaway, finally. She looks as confused as we are.

9:16 p.m.: “It’s time to address the big black elephant in the room.” (That’s Kanye. We’re Team Kanye.) Chelsea Handler doesn’t care about black people! Full disclosure: Handler kindly linked to this very website after we included her in our [Los Angeles Twitter 20](#). She probably should’ve spent less time updating her website and more time writing this monologue.

9:17 p.m.: Former “American Idol” judge Ellen DeGeneres intros Best Female Video. We kinda love all of these songs. Gaga wins for “Bad Romance!” She and DeGeneres have a moment.

9:21 p.m.: Broken Bells and Justin Bieber are in competition for Best New Artist. One of these two was the most popular act at indie fest SXSW; the other has a haircut. Beverage status: We need another.

9:26 p.m.: A commercial for Fuse, rival network to MTV, featuring Blink-182’s Mark Hoppus. Awkward joke about interviewing still-in-jail Lil Wayne — can we go back to picking on the Jonas Brothers, please? Less awkward than the Bret Michaels VH1 show ad that just came on, though.

9:29 p.m.: Best Rock Video. Apparently MGMT, Muse and Paramore all exist in the same universe. We’re rooting for Paramore. 30 Seconds to Mars wins for “Kings and Queens”; Jared Leto’s hair is doing its best 1998 Mark McGrath impression.

9:31 p.m.: Kim Kardashian introduces Justin Bieber, prompting tens of thousands of jealous tweets. JB takes the stage outside the

Nokia Theatre, changing jackets to showcase his ascent into puberty and launching into the most Metallica-esque version of “Baby” ever.

9:34 p.m.: Now he’s dancing with adorable kids with adorable gang handkerchiefs in their back pockets... and busting out a drum solo!

9:40 p.m.: Kinda looking forward to the special episode of “World of V-Neck Bro” after this.

9:41 p.m.: Wonder how much “Tron Legacy” is paying Usher for this performance. Props on the footwork, though.

9:46 p.m.: Katy Perry and Nicki Minaj are like an awesome 1970s Hanna-Barbera cartoon. Hope they go on outer space adventures after they finish introducing Best Male Video. Eminem wins, but he’s en route to New York for a concert with Jay-Z — glad he has the correct priorities.

9:51 p.m.: This FreeCreditScore.com ad: an inadvertent tribute to the LFO singer who just died. (Too soon?) Meanwhile, “Sweetie, you have poo on your face” is probably the best possible line to explain this new Katherine Heigl comedy.

9:55 p.m.: Another pre-taped Handler bit. An Auto-Tune joke from 2008. Florence and the Machine, alumni of local label IAMSOUND Records, make their VMAs debut 24 hours after playing to a packed house at Echo Park’s Origami Vinyl. This will be the only actual singing on MTV tonight. Maybe all year!

10:03 p.m.: “The VMAs are blowing up on Twitter!” **We are not proud of this.**

10:07 p.m.: We don’t watch “Glee.” Should we be watching “Glee”? The cast intros Best Pop Video, which goes to Lady Gaga — who is now dressed as the Evil Statue of Liberty.

10:10 p.m.: Rosario Dawson and Captain Kirk introduce Taylor Swift. Video footage of last year’s Kanye Interruption proceeds her debuting a new track. Yes, MTV, we remember. Twitter meanies are already playing the “Taylor can’t sing live” card, but she sounds great — if surprisingly somber in this downcast new song — to us. The overblown string arrangements are giving us weird Goo Goo Dolls vibes, though. Our friends at **Vulture** thinks the new song’s about Kanye — the lyric “32 and still growing up now” was his age last year — and Swift’s no stranger to dropping disses to the men in her life in her diary-page lyrics, but: awkward.

10:20 p.m.: This 5 React gum commercial is a Droid commercial. This “Easy A” commercial is the best. We want to flip over to “Mad Men,” but we will be strong.

10:24 p.m.: Justin Timberlake takes the stage with his “Social Network” bro-stars to announce “the most exciting new artist in music right now,” Drake. You know what would be exciting? Justin Timberlake performing on the MTV Video Music Awards. At least we’ve got Swizz and Mary J.

10:26 p.m.: Wonder what Drake’s doing for Yom Kippur on Saturday. Do hip-hop stars fast? Will he wear that jacket to temple?

10:30 p.m.: Kanye’s taking the stage in “41 minutes.” We’re going to go take a nap.

10:36 p.m.: We’re back. The “Jersey Shore” cast draws more cheers in 10 seconds than Handler has all night as she joins them in (of course) the hot tub. Why is The Situation not hosting? Why is he not running for President?

10:39 p.m.: Eminem’s “Not Afraid” wins Best Hip-Hop Video. Handler get out of the hot tub with a fake pregnancy belly, certainly a homage to new pal Lohan’s ABC Family classic “Labor Pains.”

10:47 p.m.: We take back what we said about Florence and the Machines dropping tonight’s only real vocals — Paramore’s Hayley Williams just took the stage for B.O.B.’s “Airplanes.” With that accomplished, she joins her band for the Coldplay-esque “The Only Exception,” which should school everybody in the room — you included, Taylor Swift — on how to completely crush a power ballad.

10:51 p.m.: Robyn, the world’s least famous/most critically beloved pop star, takes the stage for about 30 magnificent seconds before being cut off by a promo about an app for having a terrible bowtie. Or something.

10:55 p.m.: State Farm commercial equates sensitivity with glasses and an American Apparel-looking hoodie. Well, and bunny

adoption. We guess we can get behind that.

10:57 p.m.: Justin Bieber wins Best New Artist, has no idea how to get on or off the stage.

10:58 p.m.: Brand X crush Emma Stone and Penn Badgley (who seems to have regrown his chest hair since filming “Easy A,” phew) introduce Linkin Park. If you haven’t checked in on them in the last 10 years, they’re still really mad about something.

11:08 p.m.: Cher (still alive!) takes the stage in her “If I Could Turn Back Time” outfit, such as it is, to introduce Video of the Year. Lady Gaga wins for “Bad Romance” and rocks her third outfit of the night: glam cavewoman. She announces her new album’s title, “Born This Way,” and breaks into what’s likely the title track. Get ready to hear it all summer next year.

11:12 p.m.: Aziz Ansari introduces Kanye with a particularly uninspired gag about last year’s incident. People are booing. We are not. The hip-hop provocateur, fresh from New York Fashion Week, stands center stage in a red suit and sets up his beat on an MPC. He drops a hook about a “toast for the” words we’re not allowed to write in the L.A. Times, perhaps a self-aware acknowledgement of last year’s trainwreck. The song’s chilly beat recalls “808s & Heartbreak,” but the rapper’s sung vocals are seemingly Auto-Tune free. Clipse’s Pusha T takes the stage for a fiery verse — the kind of big-moment seal of approval the rapper doesn’t get often enough. And that’s it — a “Kanye!” chant overtakes the boos as he leaves the stage. This is what live TV redemption looks like. Welcome back, Yeezy.

11:20 p.m.: Deep breath: It’s over. For all our hipster misgivings, these VMAs were a valuable pop culture check-in: Lady Gaga won our hearts, Paramore killed it, Taylor Swift got sad, Kanye West kept it simple, Mary J. Blige can still sing the roof off and we really, really miss Justin Timberlake. Come back, JT! VMAs, it’s been a Situation — we’ll see you next year.

Elsewhere: [Pop & Hiss](#) grades the VMAs performances and [The Envelope](#) has a photo gallery of the star arrivals.

– David Greenwald

Photo: “Jersey Shore” stars The Situation, Pauly D, Snooki and J-WOWW attend the 2010 MTV Video Music Awards in Los Angeles on Sept. 12, 2010. Credit: AP Photo/Chris Pizzello