

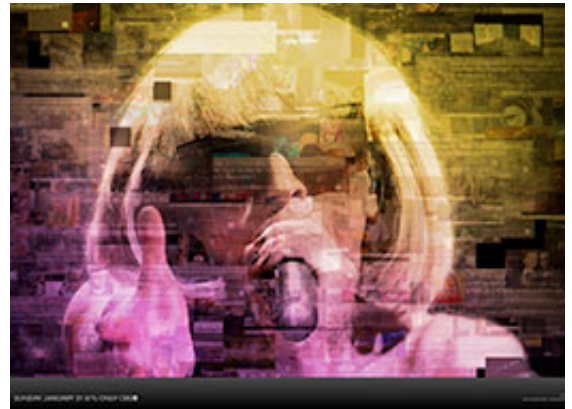
## How Social Media is Changing the 2010 Grammys



January 25, 2010 by [Christina Warren](#) 268

On Sunday January 31, 2010, the [52nd Annual Grammy Awards](#) will air live on CBS. Mashable founder Pete Cashmore will be at the ceremony (lucky dog!) but even for those of us watching at home, the Recording Academy has taken great strides to make this year's ceremony more interactive and fan-centric than ever before.

The Academy has also embraced social media for the 2010 Grammys, big time. We had a chance to talk to the RA about the move toward social media, the challenges associated with the transition and the response from the fans, artists and other Academy members.



### Why Social Media, Why Now

The Recording Academy — which was founded in 1957 and is dedicated to improving the quality of life and the cultural condition for music and the people who make it — is your typical well established organization that is reticent to change. For instance, an award for Best Rap Album wasn't even added to the Grammy ceremony until 1996 (a Best Rap Performance award was first issued in 1989, the Academy's first official recognition of the genre). If it can take that long to fully recognize one of the most popular music genres (Best Rap Song wasn't awarded until 2004), you can imagine how difficult it would be for the organization to embrace social media.

Social media introduces an entire paradigm shift into how the Academy can both connect with music lovers and with how its message is consumed and presented. That said, the Academy is aware that the paradigm shift is happening, not just to the industry, but to our culture as a whole. In order to stay relevant and connected, the Academy would have to embrace this new way of communicating. I spoke with Evan Greene, the Chief Marketing Officer of the Recording Academy about how the Grammys are embracing social media this year and how and why that decision was made.

Evan told me that the Academy established a social media task force in 2008 and did a lot of outreach in 2009, basically assessing the climate, the places where the fans were spending their time, and evaluating the decision to jump in full force. Evan made it very clear that the Academy didn't want to just haphazardly get involved, if the organization was going to do social media, it was going to do it correctly.

### Biggest Challenges

When I asked Evan what the most challenging aspect of adopting a social media strategy was, he told me that it was making the decision to actually embrace social media at all. He explained that the Academy has always tried to manage and keep very careful control over its message and brand. By embracing social media, that means giving up that control. Because while the Academy can connect directly with fans, fans can also connect back. That means accepting criticism and engaging in a discussion in a public way, something that just isn't the norm for the Academy.

I was struck by just how common this fear is, not just with older and more established brands, but even with smaller and newer companies. Social media does inherently mean that you are giving up the ability to centrally control the message. However, what is interesting is that the companies that embrace and accept that grain of truth

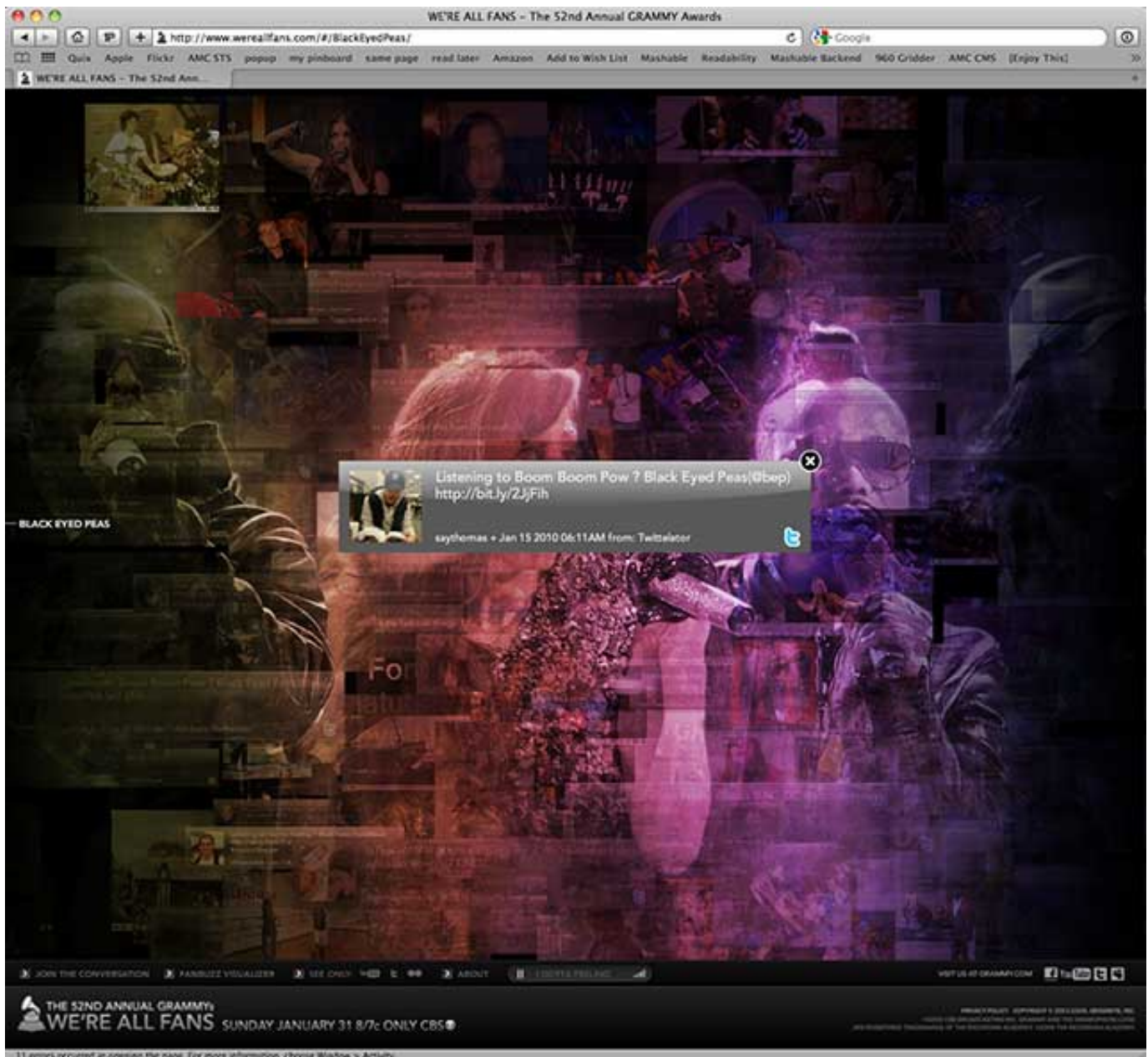
are usually those that are most successful with social media.

After making the decision to fully engage, [Grammy.com](http://www.grammy.com) was completely rebuilt and official presences were made on [Twitter \(@theGrammys\)](https://twitter.com/theGrammys), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/theGrammys) and [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/user/theGrammys). Interaction and fan-generated content from these platforms and others all contributed to what has become the centerpiece for the Grammys 2010 campaign: [We're All Fans](http://www.wereallfans.com).

## We're All Fans

Fans are the core of popular music. And unlike industry executives (and sometimes even the artists themselves), fans are often the first to embrace new technologies and social networks to share and remix content by their favorites artists. So with that in mind, TBWA\Chiat\Day, the agency of record for the Grammy awards, created a multi-format multimedia campaign related to Grammy-nominated artists, curated entirely from fan-generated content.

If you visit [WereAllFans.com](http://WereAllFans.com), you'll see portraits of some of the nominated artists composed entirely of real-time content from Twitter, Flickr, Facebook and YouTube. The content is refreshed and fed in and users can click on aspects of the content to view or play it back all on the page. It's a pretty cool way to show stuff off.



Also cool is the television campaign for We're All Fans. Comprised of YouTube performances that real fans made covering the nominated artist's song. Not only is it a cool visualization of the campaign, but for the fans that made those videos themselves, it must be amazing to see something you made and created airing on CBS and on the Internet for the whole world to see. To be clear, these weren't performances done specifically for an advertising spot, this was a clip composed of stuff that real fans made just because they're fans and they wanted to share their respective talents on YouTube.

The first spot was for Lady Gaga, who has an extremely active social media following, check it out:

After less than three weeks it has gathered more than 1.1 million views and is currently the 19th most viewed video in the music category for the month of January on YouTube.

## **Artist Feedback**

At this point, most major music artists are embracing social media to some extent, be it Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, or personal blogs. Connecting directly with fans is extremely valuable, especially in an area like music that is such an inherently collective experience. To that end, the artists themselves have taken the lead on some of the promotions for the campaign.

Lady Gaga tweeted a link to her "We're All Fans" video as soon as it went live (a day before it first aired on CBS) and embedded it on both her official website and her YouTube channel. Likewise, Beyonce has also embedded her spot on her official website.

## **Fan Feedback**

Fans, especially those featured in some of the TV spots, have responded really positively to the campaign — as

you would expect. However, an interesting component to the We're All Fans website is the FanBuzz Visualizer.

The visualizer (embedded at the right) is powered by [Visible Technologies](#) and it is a real-time visualization of fan activity across the web. Basically the widget (which is interactive — feel free to play with it and move it around) searches various social channels for comments, conversations and mentions of Grammy-nominated artists. This is then aggregated and you can see who has the most mentions within a certain window or overall.

Real-time visualizations are still new enough to be unique in and of itself, but what we find really interesting is that the information is available and shareable. For observers, this is insight into the online popularity of some of the nominated artists, for fans, it might be a way to push engagement.

## The Awards

The Grammy Awards themselves will not be broadcast online (that's a decision that is as much in the hands of CBS as it is The Recording Academy), but the Academy is making a conscious effort to keep fans engaged online before and during the show.

For 72-hours before the Grammy Awards air on CBS, Grammy.com will be streaming live performances on its website that are ancillary to the awards themselves. Plus, the now almost normative tradition of online red-carpet streamings will take place. During the Awards themselves, Grammy.com will feature backstage interviews with winning artists, which is pretty cool. Even if Grammy isn't ready to embrace online streaming of the award ceremony, they are at least aware that fans are likely to be online Tweeting or posting to Facebook during the broadcast. That's a start.

## The Future

When I asked Evan about the Academy's plans for the future, he made it clear that social media is something the RA intends to continue to invest in. Internally the organization has been pleased with the results of the campaign and of the actual consequences of embracing social media. Fears about not being able to control the message seem to be largely assuaged when caution is thrown to the wind and engagement actually takes place.


True engagement is a major component of any successful social media endeavor. If the Recording Academy continues to embrace the shifting reality and engage with fans, the net result just might be that viewers and fans take a more active interest in the

What do you think about how est  
"We're All Fans" campaign? Let u


*Disclosure: Mashable's Pete Cash*  
*notable social media influencers v*  
*social media and music. Execs fr*

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