

Two award shows aim spotlight at hot young acts

By KATE O'HARE

ZAP2IT

Of all forms of popular culture, music is perhaps the most ephemeral and the most susceptible to the fragmentation of the market.

It's possible to go for days without hearing a popular song (unless you're watching the WB Network, of course) and, if you're really out of the loop, for years without hearing about some popular artists.

Keeping up requires the kind of time and effort that a lot of people past a certain age just can't muster.

As with slang and the downward slide of hip-hugging pants, it takes very little time to get behind the times.

This week, two different awards shows offer complementary views of popular music. Choose wisely, or you could wind up feeling like the oldest person in the room.

At 8 p.m. today, ABC presents the now-venerable "American Music Awards," celebrating its 32nd year.

If you're feeling very brave and totally up to date (or would like to be able to fake it), check out the "2004 Vibe Awards," airing at 8 p.m. Tuesday on UPN (Channel 23).

The Vibes, being taped Monday in Barker Hangar in Santa Monica, Calif., honor "innovation, cutting-edge presentation and genre-expanding work in urban music."

Award categories include best R&B song, R&B voice of the year, street anthem, club banger of the year (can't touch that), the Next Award and the Boom-shot Award honoring excellence in Caribbean music.

Nominations come from the Vibe magazine editorial staff; music journalists and regional tastemakers (what is that? Does it pay well?) vote on the results.

Usher tops the list with five nominations, with four for Alicia Keys. Both are nominated for artist of the year.

Stars scheduled to perform include Keys, Nelly, Ashanti, Jadakiss with Anthony Hamilton, Snoop Dogg with Pharrell, and Elephant Man, Beenie Man and Kevin Lytle.

Jimmy Kimmel, whose late-



Jimmy Kimmel hosts the 32nd annual "American Music Awards," airing at 8 tonight on ABC. The awards honor music's most popular artists as determined by record sales.

night ABC talk show, "Jimmy Kimmel Live," has just been renewed through early 2006, is host of the AMA telecast, presented from the stage of the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles.

"It's an honor to be nominated," Kimmel said at the time of the announcement, "and I promise that my duet with Christina Aguilera will be a performance that will not soon be forgotten."

Among those scheduled to perform at the AMAs are Gwen Stefani (without the band No Doubt), Kenny Chesney, Fantasia (the most recent "American Idol" winner), Josh Groban, Toby Keith, Maroon 5, Lenny Kravitz, Jessica Simpson, Snoop Dogg & Pharrell, Twista, Usher, Uncle Kracker (in a duet with Chesney), Kanye West and Gretchen Wilson.

In its position as the comeback kid of broadcast networks, ABC is also mining its stars as presenters, including Jim Belushi ("According to Jim"), Kelly Osbourne ("Life as we know it"), William Shatner ("Boston Legal") and Nicolette Sheridan ("Desperate Housewives").

Record sales determine the winners of the AMAs (unlike the Grammys, which are peer awards).

Additionally, fast-fingered fans can vote on the T-Mobile Text In Award, with votes cast via text messaging.

Viewers can also vote at the ABC Web site or during the show via Enhanced TV. (Remember when they just wanted you to watch? Ah, the good old days of passive TV viewing, when the biggest decision was popcorn or pizza.)