

POP FLASH.



Welcome to a surreal [VMAs](#) happening in the middle of a global pandemic and the biggest American civil rights uprising in decades. It might feel like a strange time to think about pop music, but then again, part of surviving these surreal conditions is finding a moment to care for your heart and spirit, and that's what the lighthearted ethos of pop has always been about. This year's show wasn't all escapism, the realities of what's happening in our country were necessarily brought into the broadcast, but it was still nice to see a glimpse of the performers who previously seemed so easy to catch on tour, at festivals, or popping up as surprise guests at other people's concerts. Here's a rundown of the best pop moments at an admittedly strange night — but MTV kept trekking on and so will we.

— Caitlin White, Uproxx Pop Critic, on [this year's VMA pop highlights](#)

NUMBER ONE STUNNERS



BTS

After becoming one of the most instantly impactful songs in pop music history, BTS' incredible new classic pop single "Dynamite" is entering its second week as the No. 1 song in the country. The charts have been so fickle this year it's hard to tell if it will be able to hang on for weeks and weeks in the style of "Old Town Road" and "Rockstar" — but given a steady second week, the odds are good. Of course, a couple remixes

didn't hurt the song's position, either. BTS have officially arrived with their first No. 1 single and other pop stars need to sit up and take note, this group isn't just a K-pop boy band, they're full blown global stars that are here to change the face of pop forever.

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BUBBLING UNDER



SYLVAN ESSO

Though they're not quite pop stars, there are few duos going in the music industry at the moment who have more reliably delivered itchy, melodic pop songs like Sylvan Esso. The indie-pop pair of Amelia Meath and Nick Sanborn — who are real life husband and wife, as well as bandmates — are about to release [their third full-length album, *Free Love*, later this month](#), and if early single “Ferris Wheel” is any indication, it's more zinging, technicolor bliss from two musicians who perfectly marry dancefloor beats (Sanborn) and otherworldly vocals (Meath). If they're not on your radar yet, this latest album will definitely affix them firmly as one of your new favorite underground pop acts.



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REMEMBER WHEN

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, FIONA APPLE!



Early next week we celebrate the birthday of the enigmatic, occasionally absent pop icon Fiona Apple. After staging a triumphant return earlier this year with her jaw-dropping new record, *Fetch The Bolt Cutters*, Apple almost halted the music world in its tracks with more raw, confessional, no-holds-barred songwriting that won over plenty of new fans and appeased an older cohort who knew she had a few more classics in her. After an eight year hiatus, it must be a great birthday present for Fiona to return with such force. I'll be wishing her a happy one by blasting "Under The Table" as loud as I can, and refusing to say anything other than exactly what's on my mind.

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LOVE LETTERS



DUA LIPA

As if Dua Lipa hadn't already given us enough this year, she's back to steal more hearts with an all-new remix edition of her dancefloor-ready *Future Nostalgia*. If you thought it was full of club bangers in original form, just wait until you hear all the remix reimaginations that are included on *Club Future Nostalgia*. Helmed by The Blessed Madonna and including contributions from Mark Ronson, Madonna, Missy Elliott, and Gwen Stefani, this album is as much a pop star super album as it is a remix edition. Diving even deeper than before into her house music influences, Dua shows real breadth and depth as a star with excellent instincts and great taste, far beyond her own songwriting and initial collaborators. Throw this on to turn your boredom-killing evening drive into a true solo dance party.

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