

GOVERNOR HOCHUL ANNOUNCES BRASS QUEENS WINS THE FIRST-EVER MTA MUSIC UNDER NEW YORK RIDERS' CHOICE AWARD

Governor Hochul, MTA Chair Janno Lieber and WE❤️NYC Gathered in Times Square to Celebrate Finalists and Reveal Riders' Choice Award Winner

All-Female Brass Band Takes Home the Trophy

Brass Queens will Receive a Recording Session with Atlantic Records

Governor Kathy Hochul today announced the winner of the first-ever WE❤️NYC Riders' Choice Award, which invited New Yorkers to vote for their favorite of the MTA's Music Under New York's roster of subway performers. Governor Hochul was joined in Times Square by MTA Chair and CEO Janno Lieber and by representatives of Partnership for New York City, Atlantic Records recording artist and Brooklyn native ENISA, and others to find out which "busker" riders are most excited to encounter during their travels on the subway. After a week of public voting, [Brass Queens](#) took home the grand prize with 55.7 percent of more than 55,000 votes cast and will receive a recording session with Atlantic Records.

"This competition celebrates subways and music - two integral parts of the fabric of New York," **Governor Hochul said.** "Brass Queens exemplifies what it means to be a New Yorker and I am excited to watch them impress commuters and tourists alike throughout the subway system with their incredible sound."

Brass Queens is a brass band with an all-female horn section that blends funk, soul, and hip-hop that calls on New Orleans second-line tradition. They are known for their high-energy performances and their mission to empower women through music. Brass Queens' profile video can be found [here](#).

The Riders' Choice Award was developed by the WE❤️NYC campaign. It shines a light on the artists who have won coveted spots in the MTA Music Under New York program that has been bringing joy to New Yorkers' commute since it became part of MTA Arts & Design in 1987. For the first time, transit riders had the opportunity to select their favorite of three musical acts that are part of the first new cohort of performers selected for the program since the onset of the pandemic in 2020.

All three Riders' Choice finalists represent some of city's most exciting and diverse musical talent and can be seen performing across the city's subway network this year. The other finalists competing for the Riders' Choice Award were:

- [Afro Dominicano](#) — A Latin fusion band that blends traditional Dominican folkloric roots music with Afro-Caribbean soul. They are known for their high-energy riffs and romantic balladry. Afro Dominicano's profile video can be found [here](#).

- [Augie Bello](#) — An instrumentalist, vocalist, producer, and songwriter known for his energetic live saxophone performances on the streets of the city. Augie Bello's profile video can be found [here](#).

The award winner announcement event was organized with Times Square Alliance.

MTA Chair and CEO Janno Lieber said, "Music Under New York is a one-of-a-kind stage for musical performers in this city and today – for the first time since the program began in 1987 – New Yorkers voted for their favorite performer. All these performers reflect the incredible dynamism New Yorkers experience in the transit system."

MTA Arts & Design Director Sandra Bloodworth said, "Every musical performance along the way, whether it was today or the auditions held a few weeks ago, reflect the diversity of New York and are truly a memorable experience. I'm thrilled to celebrate Music Under New York's first ever Riders' Choice winner, and excited for all the new performers to the program, to do what they love in the greatest venue there is, in a city with an unwavering appreciation of talent."

Partnership for New York City President and CEO Kathryn Wylde said, "WE♥NYC is dedicated to showcasing the extraordinary qualities of New York City and its residents. Brass Queens is a prime example of the talent New Yorkers will encounter just by taking the subway. We sincerely congratulate Brass Queens and our other finalists, whose skill and love of performing help make New York a more joyful place to be, and we thank the thousands of New Yorkers who voted to for their Riders' Choice."

The Riders' Choice Award is the latest project developed and facilitated by WE♥NYC, a new campaign funded by the members of the Partnership for New York City to encourage New Yorkers to show their love for their city through civic action and community engagement.

MTA MUSIC has more than 350 performers showcasing classical strings, jazz ensembles, world music bands, folk, a cappella groups, singer-songwriters and more, featuring a wide range of instruments such as the Gambian kora, Korean drum, West Indian steel drums, Andean pipes, Cajun cello, Celtic and Baroque harps, guitars, violins, hammered dulcimers and musical saws. Performers are programmed at 43 MTA MUSIC locations throughout the transit system, including subway stations and MTA commuter rail terminals and the Staten Island Ferry terminal. MTA Arts & Design presents more than 7,500 musical performances in the transit system every year. The musicians perform in designated locations with a Music Under New York banner that features their name and the Music Under New York logo.

For the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic, the MTA has selected a new cohort of 24 MTA MUSIC performers to play under its banner. The initial auditions were conducted by MTA Arts & Design, which provides visual and performing arts in the MTA network. Forty acts auditioned at Grand Central Madison on June 28, and 128 had applied to be considered for the opportunity. Normally an annual occurrence, the auditions were the first to be held since 2019, and the 33rd

to be held since MTA MUSIC became an Arts & Design program in 1987. This was the first time the public has been able to vote for their favorite MTA MUSIC performer.

About MTA Arts & Design

MTA Arts & Design encourages the use of public transportation by providing visual and performing arts in the New York metropolitan area. The Percent for Art program is one of the largest and most diverse collections of site-specific public art in the world, with more than 350 commissions by world-famous, mid-career and emerging artists. Arts & Design produces Posters, Digital Art, photographic Lightbox exhibitions, as well as live musical performances in stations through its Music Under New York (MTA MUSIC) program, and the Poetry in Motion program in collaboration with the Poetry Society of America. It serves the millions of people who rely upon MTA subways and commuter trains and strives to create meaningful connections between sites, neighborhoods, and people. To learn more, visit mta.info/art or follow on Twitter at [@MTAArtsDesign](https://twitter.com/MTAArtsDesign).

About WE♥️NYC

WE♥️NYC is a cross-sector campaign to showcase the city's strengths and mobilize New Yorkers to make sure this remains the greatest city in the world. The citywide campaign celebrates New Yorkers who are making a difference — the “Do-ers” — and features opportunities for civic engagement that everyone can join. No taxpayer dollars were used for this effort, and all New Yorkers are invited to get involved at weloventyc.nyc.

About Atlantic Records

Atlantic Records celebrates its 75th anniversary in 2023. Founded in New York City, the label literally grew from a one-room operation into one of the world's preeminent music companies. Atlantic has released a string of recordings that have had a profound impact on the course of modern music, its rich history including such musical icons as Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin, John Coltrane, and Led Zeppelin. The Atlantic Records Group roster today includes many of the world's most popular recording artists and soundtracks. Artists such as Kelly Clarkson, Bruno Mars, Ed Sheeran, Cardi B, Sia, Coldplay, Charlie Puth, Janelle Monáe, Jack Harlow, Death Cab for Cutie, Matchbox Twenty, Lil Uzi Vert, Gucci Mane, Melanie Martinez, Rob Thomas, Skrillex, Roddy Ricch and many more, as well as soundtracks including The Greatest Showman, Hamilton, Fast and Furious, Suicide Squad, Birds of Prey, Jagged Little Pill The Musical, the Spinning Gold soundtrack, and more.

###