

# Rap anti-hero Tupac Shakur bigger in death than life

Tupac Shakur's recording career lasted just five years before he was murdered in 1996, but it is the rapper's influence from beyond the grave that will be celebrated when he is inducted in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame on Friday. Arguably bigger in death than he was in life, Shakur will be only the sixth rap act to be voted into the Hall of Fame in its 30-year history. The Hall of Fame described him as "an international symbol of resistance and outlaw spirit, an irresistible contradiction, a definitive rap anti-hero." That is a big claim for the Harlem-born son of two Black Panther activists who spent time in jail for assault and released just four albums before being killed at age 25 in a drive-by shooting in Las Vegas that has never been resolved.

Rap too has evolved, becoming the second most popular music genre in the United States after rock, reflecting and challenging social inequities in its lyrics and music videos, and inspiring symposiums at prestigious universities such as Harvard. Shakur has sold 75 million albums, mostly from seven posthumous releases, and although his sales figures will never match those of 21st century hip hop kings like Drake,

Kanye West and The Weeknd, his influence remains profound. "For anyone who is serious about learning about hip hop, there are certain people whose music you have to deal with and Tupac is one of those people. You can't say you are knowledgeable about hip hop if you don't know about Tupac," said Todd Boyd, professor of cinema and media studies at the University of Southern California.

### Holograms and Hollywood

Boyd was one of the academics who first created the study of hip hop culture in the American university system in the early 1990s when it was often demonized by politicians for promoting violence and misogyny. He said Shakur had an emotional energy that distinguished him from many of his contemporaries and transcended his skills as a rapper or a lyricist. "When you listen to Tupac, you feel something. He has a strong emotional impact that I think speaks to the fact that here was a guy who, in my mind, was going perhaps to be a better actor than rapper, had he lived," Boyd said. Shakur's "appearance" in a hologram at the Coachella



Tupac Shakur

music festival in 2012 sent sales of his music soaring. He has also been the subject of several documentaries, a Broadway play, a June movie release "All Eyez on Me" and an upcoming TV series on Shakur and his friend-turned-rival Biggie Smalls. "Everybody loves a mystery. That's a huge part of the mythos

that surrounds his death, that it's unsolved," said Richard "RJ" Bond, who in March released "Tupac Assassination: The Battle for Compton," his fifth documentary about Shakur.

Other than his murder, the Los Angeles film maker believes people gravitate towards Shakur's music today because his observations about politics, the media, the police and relationships are still relevant. "His themes are timeless and universal. He talked about relationships between sons and parents, between people and governments. What he talked about still resonates with the human condition," Bond said. Boyd said Shakur does not need induction in the Rock Hall of Fame to confer legitimacy, although the honor is nice for his fans. "When you listen to hip hop even these days there is still a great deal of reverence for him. And for any member of the community who is young enough not to have been alive when he was around, to go back to his music now is very important to them," Boyd said. — Reuters



Workers prepare the stage for French electronic music pioneer Jean-Michel Jarre ahead of his upcoming concert to publicize the plight of the shrinking Dead Sea at the ancient cliff top fortress of Masada.



French electronic music pioneer Jean-Michel Jarre speaks to a man as he prepares the stage for his upcoming concert.— AFP photos

## ELECTRO MUSIC PIONEER PLANS DEAD SEA SHOW TO DEFY TRUMP

Pioneering electronic musician Jean-Michel Jarre said he wants to use an all-night concert at the Dead Sea to highlight what he sees as the anti-environmental policies of US President Donald Trump. The French musician, who shot to fame in the 1970s, will perform in front of the ancient Masada fortress in Israel on Thursday in a bid to draw attention to the "urgency of saving the Dead Sea," he told AFP. The lake shared by Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian territories, which is the lowest and saltiest body of water in the world, is receding by roughly a meter (three feet) per year.

Experts have warned it is on course to dry out by 2050. The musician said he wants to "make the world aware" of the danger. With a youthful look despite his 68 years, he warned of the lack of oxygen in the Dead Sea—an allusion to his best known album "Oxygene". Jarre is a goodwill ambassador for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which in 2002 designated Masada a world heritage site. The venue at the foot of the fortress is one of the most stunning sites in the region and the location of a seminal event in Jewish history.

Biblical King Herod built Masada fortress in the first century BC on a rocky outcrop 430 meters (1290 feet) above the Dead Sea. In 73 AD, Roman troops besieged 960 Jewish Zealots there after they rebelled against the Roman rule of then Palestine, according to a historian of the period, Flavius Joseph. Instead of allowing themselves to fall captive, they committed collective suicide.



Workers prepare the stage for French electronic music pioneer Jean-Michel Jarre ahead of his upcoming concert to publicize the plight of the shrinking Dead Sea at the ancient cliff top fortress of Masada.

### 'Aware of the urgency'

"I want the Dead Sea, like Masada, to be part of UNESCO's world heritage," Jarre said during a pre-show visit to the site. "This region belongs to humanity," he said. "It involves all of us from a human point of view. We must do our utmost to preserve this place." Jarre has had a prolific output, once pro-

ducing three albums in a year and a half, and is renowned for large-scale outdoor performances including laser shows and pyrotechnics. He is a four-time Guinness world record holder for number of spectators, once performing in front of 3.5 million people in Moscow.

But this time he said he wanted an "intimate" concert, out of respect for his surroundings. The concert will include performances by Israeli and French DJs and musicians, along with two sets by Jarre himself. The show is to end at sunrise on Friday morning. Only 10,000 tickets will be available, for between \$128 and \$767 (120 and 720 euros), said the show's Israeli artistic director, Alexandra Juran, who will also direct a film of the concert set to be launched on the internet later this year. Jarre said he hopes to "reach as many people as possible" with his message. Trump is set to roll back a slew of environmental protection measures implemented under former president Barack Obama, in a bid to untether the US fossil fuel industry. The move has triggered doubts over the United States' commitment to global climate accords. Trump has also given final approval for the controversial Keystone XL oil pipeline from Canada into the United States, reversing Obama's decision to block it. "For me, the whole point of this project is to make people aware of the urgency of dealing with the Earth as a whole," Jarre said. "The concert will contribute to, I hope, organizing the resistance against all the Trumps of the world." — AFP

## Roland founder, digital music pioneer Ikutaro Kakehashi dies

Ikutaro Kakehashi, the Japanese engineer who pioneered digital music and founded synthesizer giant Roland Corp., has died, his company ATV Corp. said Monday. He was 87. Kakehashi, reputed to have devoted his life to the pursuit of live entertainment, had a definitive impact on shaping the sound of electronic, hip hop and dance music. He founded Roland in 1972, and the company's first product was the rhythm machine. Since then, Roland instruments have graced the stage of top artists from Lady Gaga to Omar Hakim. Kakehashi received a Grammy in 2013 for developing MIDI, or Musical Instrument Digital Interface, which digitally connects instruments.

Upon receiving the Grammy, Kakehashi noted how quickly the years had passed since the debut of the MIDI protocol in 1983. "It is my great pleasure that MIDI played a significant role in their prevalence," he said at that time on the Roland website. "This year's Technical GRAMMY Award is the result of the cooperation by the companies who worked towards the same dream - growth of electronic musical instruments." ATV, a company Kakehashi founded in 2013, after he left Roland, declined to give details about his death, citing the family's wishes for privacy. Japanese media reports said Kakehashi died on Saturday.

"Music literally would not be what it is today without Mr. Kakehashi," said Steven Fisher, now at Yamaha and a former employee at Roland, who worked with Kakehashi on electronic percussion and drum products. Kakehashi taught him not to plan for something perfect, instead advising him to "take action, follow your passion and respect your competition," Fisher said on his Facebook page Saturday, mourning his death. Kakehashi always stressed that the advent of electronic music was not at odds with acoustic instruments, or that it was trying to undermine the rich legacy of music.

But amplification held great potential, including the possibility to create various speakers as well as present music to far larger audiences, like the hundreds at concert halls, not the previous dozens in old-style chamber settings, he said. One Roland product he liked to show off was a guitar that was a collaboration with Fender, which could not only play Stratocaster riffs but also the sounds of an acoustic guitar, sitar and 12-string acoustic guitar, as well as instantly drop octaves and distort notes. "The options have widened," Kakehashi said of electronic music at a Roland seminar in 2012. "I believe the ways of musical expression have expanded." — AP



This photo shows Japanese engineer Ikutaro Kakehashi. — AP

## Review: Unreleased 1976 Bill Evans Trio gig intimate treat

"On A Monday Evening" is the first release of a 1976 recording by the Bill Evans Trio, an autumn concert in Wisconsin that finds the influential pianist and his partners in outstanding form. Sharing the stage with bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Eliot Zigmund on Evans originals like "Sugar Plum" and "Time Remembered" or standards like "All of You" and "Someday My Prince Will Come," the leader and his ensemble's improvisational brilliance makes this release well worth discovering. Recorded at the University of Wisconsin's Madison Union Theater by radio DJs who interviewed Evans then, the sound is well-balanced, surprisingly good mono and feels intimate despite the large auditorium.

The impact of Bill Evans on jazz pianists and beyond - from Keith Jarrett to Lyle Mays to Fred Hersch - has been described as "overpowering." From his contributions to Miles Davis' "Kind of Blue" to his groundbreaking trio with Scott LaFaro and Paul Motian, Evans innovated, fascinated and entertained in large measure. Gomez, who spent over a decade with Evans, and Zigmund, whose tenure in the 1970s was shorter but also well regarded, provide not only imaginative support but also exceptional creative skills developing deep musical feedback with the ringing tones of Evans' piano. On the bowed (or arco) bass solo on "All of You," Gomez occasionally makes his instrument sound like a saxophone. Over the nearly 47 minutes in this set, Evans, Gomez and Zigmund add a precious chapter to their high-caliber legacy. — AP

## Senegal's Orchestra Baobab returns with dance galore



Senegal's Orchestra Baobab honors a former bandmate on "Tribute to Ndiouga Dieng," a spicy mix of African and Cuban tempos with no rust and a fluctuating pulse. Relying on two-saxophone leads and kora player Abdoulaye Cissoko to partially fill in for Barthelemy Attisso - their long-time guitarist now busy with a legal career - the orchestra's seemingly effortless ability to create irresistible dance rhythms remains intact even after a 10-year pause. Dieng died in November 2016 but his son Alpha has been recruited to sing his songs.

Regular vocalists Balla Sidibe, also on timbales, and Rudy Gomis continue their strong work, joined in exciting guest spots by Cheikh Lo and West African megastar Thione Seck, also a Baobab alumni, who

reprises "Sey," a dance-floor classic. Formed in 1970, the band's career was revived by the re-edition of its mouthwatering, hip-shaking "Pirates Choice," and they got back together in 2001. This is just their third album since that return - after the Grammy-nominated "Specialist In All Styles" from 2002 and 2007's "Made in Dakar" - and it's a wonderful addition to their rich catalog. It's subtlety and insinuation as much as the actual tick-tick-tock of the percussion and Charlie Ndiaye's velvety bass guitar that complete the seduction, as the band disguises its achievements with all the skills of a suave lover. Or, in this case, a whole orchestra of them! — AP

## Q&A: Nolan previews adrenaline rushing war epic 'Dunkirk'

Director Christopher Nolan has spent his career bending minds (and cities) with his films. He works on a scale that is stubbornly and obsessively cinematic and it seems that no concept, be it Batman or the multiverse or dreams, is too big for the visionary filmmaker. His latest movie, "Dunkirk," out July 21, takes him out of the fantasy world and into reality and the storied evacuation of Allied soldiers from that beach in France in May and June of 1940. Nolan spoke to The Associated Press about "Dunkirk" at the recent CinemaCon in Las Vegas, where he was promoting his epic to theater owners:

### AP: Why Dunkirk?

**Nolan:** As a filmmaker you're always looking for a gap in cultural movies and Dunkirk is a story British people are raised on. It's in our DNA practically. But it has not been addressed in the movies. So for me, it was a very exciting gap. I've spent a number of years trying to figure out what's the angle of approach, what's the angle of attack for getting the story across? So we came upon the notion of creating a very experiential film, one that rather than trying to address the politics of the situation, the geopolitical situation, would really put you on the beach where 400,000 people are trapped, surrounded by the enemy closing in and faced with annihilation or surrender. The fact the story ended with neither

annihilation nor surrender makes it one of the greatest stories in human history.

### AP: How did you approach it?

**Nolan:** The approach is trying to take the full experience and put the audience there. What would it be like to be on the beach? To be on a boat trying to cross the channel? It's a huge challenge, but exactly the kind of challenge that you look for in film.

### AP: You have said the film is less about character than survival. Can you explain what you mean?

**Nolan:** I feel like Dunkirk is such a universal event and it involves so many people that to try to encapsulate the specific detail of the human experience wasn't the way to go. What we decided to do was to really try and live in the moment of the experience ... the very immediate and human desire to survive. It's the most human movie I've ever made because it's about the desire for survival. We wanted to tackle that and make what I refer to as a very present tense narrative where you're in the moment with the characters. You're not necessarily spending too much time discussing who they were before or who they will be after.

### AP: This film has been rated PG-13. Was that a choice you made?

**Nolan:** All of my big blockbuster films have been PG-13. It's a rating I feel comfortable working with totally. "Dunkirk" is not a war film. It's a survival story and first and foremost a suspense film. So while there is a high level of intensity to it, it does not necessarily concern itself with the bloody aspects of combat, which have been so well done in so many films. We were really trying to take a different approach and achieve intensity in a different way. I would really like lots of different types of people to get something out of the experience.

### AP: Is there any truth to the report that the production bought a \$5 million vintage plane to crash?

**Nolan:** No. We used real antique vintage planes and flew them for the movie but we also constructed full scale models to destroy. A lot of money was involved but not that much money. I would never! Obviously never ... These planes are so beautiful and so valuable for so many reasons and the respect I have for them having done this, especially now having worked with them. The Spitfire is the most glorious machine.

### AP: And you tell the story from three points of view?

**Nolan:** The story needs to be told from different points of view intertwined. We spend time looking at various points of view. On the beach. In the air. Out on the sea.