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GRAMMYS

CONTINUE NAVIGATION

Awards show CEO discusses Bad Bunny, K-pop movements and viewership

Melissa Ruggieri USA TODAY

Over the last few years, the Grammys have had to adapt to the unexpected. • In 2020, mere hours before the Los Angeles awards show, Lakers legend Kobe Bryant died in a helicopter crash. The 2021 and 2022 ceremonies faced COVID-19 disruptions. Last year, devastating wildfires impacted the show and many of its celebrities. • So it’s understandable that, even with no current obstacles, Recording Academy CEO Harvey Mason Jr. says, “We do not exhale. We’re always holding our breath trying to create one of the most complicated shows and focus on celebrating music.” • This year’s coronation of music’s supernovas will air live from Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles Feb. 1, with Trevor Noah returning as host. Kendrick Lamar leads the nominations with nine, and Lady Gaga as well as Bad Bunny are among the top nominees.

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ILLUSTRATION BY BRIAN GRAY/USA TODAY NETWORK; GETTY IMAGES

Author of ‘Why We Love Football’

set to speak in Naples on Feb. 2

Vicky Bowles
Special to the Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

So here we are in mid-winter, with the Cinderella story conclusion of the college football championship behind us and the 60th Super Bowl just ahead. Why does football have such a hold on Americans’ hearts? What are our favorite moments? Well, count on veteran sportswriter Joe Posnanski to have some opinions in his latest book, “Why We Love Football: A History in 100 Moments.”

A witty and entertaining storyteller, Posnanski will be the next speaker in the 2026 Nonfiction Author Series, on Monday, Feb. 2.

Presented by the nonprofit Friends of the Library of Collier County at the Hil-



Posnanski

ton Naples, this is the second of four separate author presentations — each with a hot/cold buffet breakfast and a book signing by the author — that are designed to raise money for the 10 branches of the Collier County Public Library.

A limited number of single-event tickets are available for the remainder of the 2026 series. (See the info box for details.)

Sports is in his blood

After Posnanski, the Nonfiction Series will conclude with two other veterans of The New York Times best-seller list: Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer Jonathan Eig on Monday, Feb. 16, and historian Hampton Sides on Tuesday, March 17.

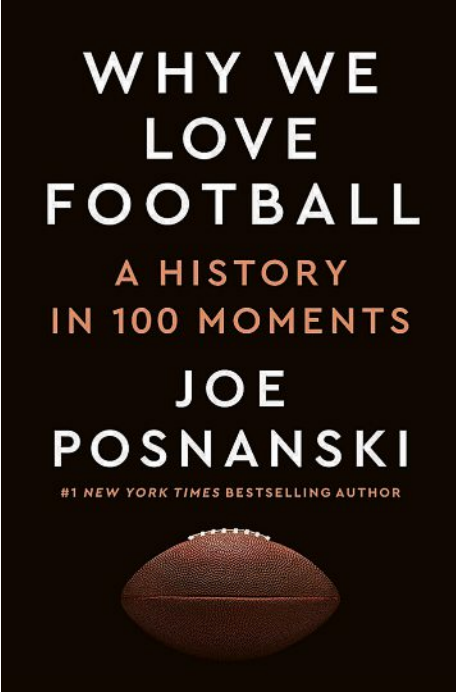
For Posnanski, sports is in his blood. A former newspaper sports columnist, then later a senior writer at Sports Illus-

trated, he’s been named National Sportswriter of the Year by five different organizations. He’s a prolific blogger and a podcaster whose eight published books include “Why We Love Baseball: A History in 50 Moments,” “The Secret of Golf: The Story of Tom Watson and Jack Nicklaus” and “Paterno.”

His latest New York Times best-seller, “Why We Love Football: A History in 100 Moments,” is a countdown with many of the expected highlights from past high school, college and pro football games (such as Franco Harris’ Immaculate Reception, or Knute Rockne and the Gipper).

But be prepared to be surprised, too, by some of the moments Posnanski chooses to honor. And, for every “moment” included, he has a new bit of information that makes each anecdote fresh and fun.

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Joe Posnanski, author of “Why We Love Football,” will speak in the Nonfiction Author Series for the Friends of the Library of Collier County on Feb. 2 at the Hilton Naples in Naples. PROVIDED BY FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY OF COLLIER COUNTY

Sphere Las Vegas plans mini version in Maryland

Melissa Ruggieri
USA TODAY

Turns out, what happens in Vegas doesn't only stay in Vegas.

The Sphere – the technologically superior venue just off the Strip in Las Vegas – is getting a mini-replica in Maryland.

Sphere Entertainment Co., the state of Maryland, Prince George's County and Peterson Companies announced that the second Sphere in the U.S. will be built at National Harbor, a dining and shopping mecca within miles of Washington DC and Virginia.

“Our focus has always been on creating a global network of Spheres across forward-looking cities,” said James L. Dolan, executive chairman and CEO of Sphere Entertainment, in a statement.

The proposed National Harbor location would have a capacity of 6,000 seats, about a third of the Las Vegas

venue's capacity. Like the current Sphere, the smaller version would also feature an Exosphere, the exterior LED display that showcases a rotating slate of artistic and branded content.

The venue would also be fitted with a 16K x 16K interior display plane – the same resolution as in Vegas, which is the highest-resolution LED screen. The Sphere Immersive sound, which recently made its debut at Radio City Music Hall, haptic seating and 4D environmental effects that make the Vegas location a cathedral of sight and sound, would also be incorporated.

According to Sphere Entertainment, the project – which is contingent upon “execution of definitive agreements,” as well as incentives and approvals from state and county governments – will support about 4,750 jobs once operational.

The venue would utilize a combination of public and private funding, in-



Sphere National Harbor would be situated in Maryland, just a few miles from Washington, DC, and Virginia. PROVIDED BY SPHERE ENTERTAINMENT

cluding about \$200 million in state, local and private incentives.

Since opening in Las Vegas in 2023 with a jaw-dropping spectacle from U2, the Sphere has hosted long-running vi-

sual and sonic feats from artists including the Eagles, Kenny Chesney, Backstreet Boys, Phish, Dead & Company and, coming in May, No Doubt.

In 2024, Sphere Entertainment announced plans to bring the Sphere global with a venue in Abu Dhabi.

The National Harbor location would present some competition for the neighboring MGM National Harbor casino, which is outfitted with the 3,000-capacity The Theater at MGM National Harbor. In recent months, the venue has presented shows from Patti LaBelle, Ludacris, Earth, Wind & Fire, Martin Lawrence, Air Supply and Amy Grant.

In addition to concerts, Sphere Las Vegas found massive success with its enhanced version of “The Wizard of Oz.” Since its August opening, more than 2 million tickets have been sold, resulting in more than \$260 million in sales, according to Sphere brass. The film is currently playing through all of 2026.

Grammys

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The show is reliably packed with performances, often from the most nominated stars, such as Sabrina Carpenter. Best new artist nominees Addison Rae, Alex Warren, Katseye, Leon Thomas, Lola Young, Olivia Dean, Sombr and The Marias will perform in a special segment.

In his recent chat with USA TODAY, Mason wouldn't detail a potential Bob Weir/Grateful Dead tribute during the ceremony, noting it was a “tragic year” with the death of many major musicians, but said, “We've done so much to make sure we're doing these tributes respectfully and in a creative way – that is always top of mind.”

But the Recording Academy chief did share his thoughts on top nominee Kendrick Lamar, the global impact of Bad Bunny's music and how five nominations for the “Kpop Demon Hunters” soundtrack might signal a future K-pop Grammy category.

Question: Kendrick Lamar has nine nominations this year and 22 career awards. It seems as if Grammy voters don't even think twice now about spotlighting hip-hop.

Mason: Isn't that great? It's a result of the popularity of the genre, the talent, the prolific nature of the artists. Our membership plays a role in that – the genres and the types of creators being honored. You have legends and superstars and up and comers, artists who have taken the traditional path and people on TikTok.

How else do you think the influx of new members might impact voting and viewership?

I hope it impacts voting by more reflective outcomes on our nominees and winners. Making sure the voting body is representative of music gives us a chance that we're more relevant. These are the people making the most interesting music of the year and that leads to, what can we put on the show? How do we reach consumers and get them excited? That allows us to generate revenue for all of the things the Recording Academy does all year, like the \$15 mil-



Sabrina Carpenter, shown performing at the 2025 MTV Video Music Awards, will also perform this year's Grammy Awards, where she is nominated six times. MIKE COPPOLA/GETTY IMAGES

lion raised for FireAid from MusiCares [in 2025].

What do you think is the most competitive Grammys category?

They're all competitive. Everyone is going to be biting fingernails and pulling out hair. Think of all the time and energy and passion that go into all of those projects. Anyone you select is a valid winner.

Bad Bunny's album nomination for “Debi Tirar Más Fotos” is the second time an all-Spanish album has received an album of the year nod and the other was also him (“Un Verano Sin Ti” in 2023). What are your thoughts on what he's done to expand not just the Grammys, but music, to a broader culture?

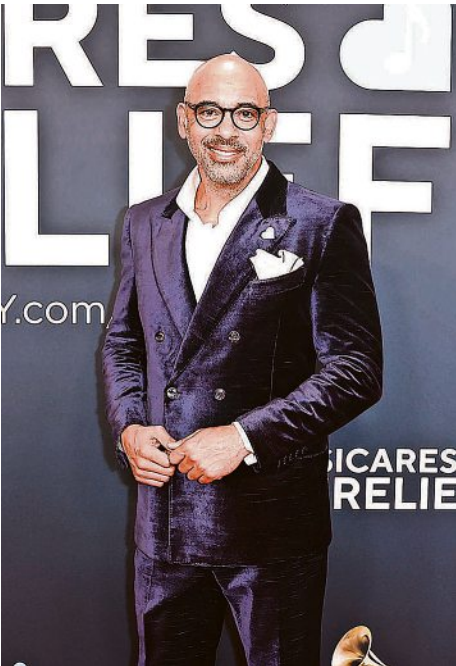
He's had such an amazing year and there's been massive movement of the needles based on what he's done. Music, his performances ... what he's done is highlight what is happening in music – different sounds, styles, artists who

all have the possibility of shaping the core of music. Everyone is accepting music from where it comes from, no matter the language whether it's Afro beats or K-pop or Bollywood in India. Now it's just about great music. When you look at Bad Bunny, you realize people are really coming together to be moved.

We've talked about K-pop the past couple of years in the sense of when might it have its own category. I'm guessing you never thought an animated Netflix movie (“Kpop Demon Hunters”) would be the thing to really break the genre at the Grammys.

It's not what I saw coming, but that genre has been impactful for quite some time, 15 years now. But seeing the growth and evolution of where the artists come from, I'm not surprised they're being recognized the way they are.

So do you think the time has come for a K-pop category?



Harvey Mason Jr., the CEO of MusicCares & Recording Academy, attends the 67th annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles on Feb. 2, 2025. MATT WINKELMEYER/GETTY IMAGES

There's more groundswell for a category now, but categories are determined by the members and music communities. When a contingency wants to be represented they create proposals and our members vote on it. Like with the contemporary country category [new for 2026], that came from the music community saying we want to honor our music differently, we want to talk about that category. I don't choose the categories. I hope people don't have problems with it, because the objective is to honor more music.

This will be the sixth year Trevor Noah is hosting. Why he is still the best choice?

Trevor has been the perfect host and a big part of the reason our show is what it is and the growth the show has created has been influenced by him. He's funny, smart, respectful, full of positive energy and he's also a huge fan of music. He loves music and that comes through. He doesn't take jabs at the expense of the community. There's nothing cringey. There is enough of that going around.

Author

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Posnanski is a Cleveland-area native who lives in Charlotte, North Carolina, with his family. His website is <https://www.joeposnanski.com/>

Naples Daily News: What's a football weekend like in the Posnanski household? Are you watching on multiple screens, and recording some games to watch later? Do you have hometown or alum favorites? What happens when football season overlaps with your first love, baseball?

‘We can't help where we were born’

Joe Posnanski: I'd love to say that I have a Minority Report setup with multiple television screens all going on at once and me in the middle of the room just bouncing from game to another, but that's not it at all. It's pretty tame. We have one game going, my wife, Margo, sits on end of the couch and does some work, I sit in my recliner and eat snacks. I watch the Cleveland Browns every week, which isn't great for my health but we can't help where we were born. I have lost a lot of my love for college football, unfortunately, but I still try to catch up when the playoffs roll around.

NDN: What about college football? Recently we had coaches fired at U. of Michigan and Ohio U. for inappropriate relationships with employees or students, amid some charges of violence. But then, when Heisman winner Fernando Mendoza shines that sweet smile and thanks his mom and grandparents, do you love the game again?

JP: I have, sadly, fallen out of love with college football. It wasn't any one thing; I just sort of feel like the game drifted away from my interests. I used to be a Heisman Trophy voter, but I was really unhappy when they took the Heisman away from Reggie Bush, and I quit. I used to watch college football every Saturday, but then I stopped knowing what conference everyone was in. I am happy the players are getting paid now, but I don't love how commercial the sport has become. And, as always, the violence is difficult to accept. So it's a lot of things. But yes, when I'm watching the games, and the bands play and the cheerleaders throw each other up in the air and there are 100,000 people cheering at Clemson or Columbus or Tallahassee, and a team like Indiana just emerges, and the game is close, it all feels wonderful again.

NDN: Please give us a preview of your next book, “Big Fan,” which comes out in May and sounds like a lot of fun. In fact, it's included in The New York Times list of Most Anticipated Nonfiction Books of

2026.

JP: I'm so excited about it — it's the first book I've written with someone else. And not just any “someone else.” I wrote this book with my great friend Michael Schur, who created the classic shows “Parks and Recreation” and “Brooklyn 99” and “The Good Place.” We traveled around the world to write about what it means to be a fan. So we went to, just for example, the World Darts Championship in London and a Premier League game in Liverpool and a hockey game in Montreal and the Indigenous Stickball World Series in Philadelphia, Mississippi. We went to a professional pickleball tournament (boo!) and Wrestlemania and an Olympic basketball game and multiple baseball games and the place with the world-largest baseball card collection. It was basically a dream — Mike and I still can't believe they let us do it. I can't wait for people to read it, because it's about the stuff that connects us, the passions we have, but more than anything, it's just a whole lot of fun.

NDN: Because we're a nonprofit that supports public libraries, we like to ask authors about their library memories. Does anything stand out to you, either from childhood or more recently?

JP: Yes, I will definitely be sharing my favorite library story about my mother, the little library around the corner and Harlequin Romances. I don't want to

give more than that away. But it's fair to say that libraries are at the very center of my life and my work, and I'm deeply in love with them. That's why I'm so excited to be coming to Naples!

Nonfiction Author Series

What: Four separate author presentations with a breakfast and a book signing to raise funds for the Collier County Public Library

Where: Hilton Naples, 5111 Tamiami Trail N., Naples

When: Breakfast is served at 8:30 a.m.; the authors speak shortly after 9:15 a.m., followed by a book signing

2026 author lineup: **Evan Friss**, “The Bookshop: A History of the American Bookstore,” Monday, Jan. 19; **Joe Posnanski**, “Why We Love Football: A History in 100 Moments,” Monday, Feb. 2; **Jonathan Eig**, “King: A Life,” Monday, Feb. 16; and **Hampton Sides**, “The Wide Wide Sea: Imperial Ambition, First Contact and the Fateful Final Voyage of Captain James Cook,” Tuesday, March 17

Cost: A limited number of tickets may be available for the remaining individual speakers. For prices and details, call the Friends office at 239-262-8135 or email Marlene Haywood, the Friends' Program Director, at mhaywood@collier-friends.org.

A portion of the ticket purchase can be tax-deductible.