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Latin Grammy Awards Honor Ana Belen, Victor Manuel and Milanes

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"It is an unexpected award, although all are," said a visibly moved Ana Belen during a gala at the KA Theatre in the MGM Hotel in Las Vegas.

"One doesn't work for awards, so any of them, in addition to continue working, is a double honor. And they are giving them to us for excellence. Maybe, we are not that misguided in what we do," the Spanish musician joked.

Her husband Victor Manuel, another recipient, called the recognition a "cherry on top" of his 50-year-long career and stressed the importance of music in a world where "neither wars nor poverty nor solidarity end."

Other musicians who were honored with the award included Cuba's Pablo Milanes, Puerto Rico's El Gran Combo, Argentina's Gato Barbieri, Dominican Republic's Angela Carrasco and Brazil's Djavan.



Pablo Milanés holding his honorific award

Milanés, credited with classics including, Yolanda and Pobre del Cantor, dedicated his award to his family, the Cuban people and all his listeners, who inspire him to continue to make music.

"It is very emotional and significant because it is a tribute to the sacrifice of a lifetime. It has enormous significance. It is deserving for those who do a thing wholeheartedly and with responsibility," said Rafael Ithier, founder of El Gran Combo, whose youthful energy belied his 90 years of age.

Angela Carrasco, known for hits that include Boca Rosa, Quererte a ti, Caribe and La Candela, expressed her gratitude to fellow artist Camilo Sesto, behind some of her most famous songs.

"The Grammy is an award that perhaps I thought I would win for best song or best singer, but at that time there were no Latin Grammys," Carrasco lamented.

Gato Barbieri, 86, said receiving such an honor at this stage of his life "is a sublime thing" and urged those wanting to become professional musicians to "practice, practice, practice."

The surprise of the evening was reserved for the end when Canadian singer Celine Dion handed over the Trustees Award to music producer Humberto Gatica, with whom she had worked on her first English album.

Federico Britos and Chelique Sarabia were the other recipients of the award, along with Gatica.

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