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Kazakh DJ Imanbek Makes History With First Post-Soviet Grammy

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Imanbek's unpredicted success reflects the power shift in pop music from industry powerhouses to young audiences. **Instagram / imanbekmusic**

Kazakh DJ Imanbek Zeikenov has snagged a Grammy for Best Remixed Recording for "Roses," a chart-topping remake of rapper SAINt JHN's melodic hit that went viral on TikTok and racked up over 1 billion plays on Spotify.

The 20-year-old self-taught producer and ex-rail transport worker from northern Kazakhstan became the first artist from a post-Soviet country to win the coveted award outside classical and choral categories. Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev is also a Grammy winner, alongside former U.S. President Bill Clinton and Italian actor Sophia Loren, for a children's spoken-word album.

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The unexpected pop star Imanbek made history by edging out remixes by RAC, Morgan Page,

Louie Vega and Haywyre at Sunday's socially distanced event.

A live feed showed Zeikenov expressing shock and excitement while accepting the award from Mexican singer-songwriter Lupita Infante.

"Thanks my mom, thanks my dad, thanks my team [...] thanks GRAMMY," he said via video link, holding up the gilded gramophone trophy.

"The GRAMMY is ours," Zeikenov declared in the Russian language in a subsequent Instagram Story.

Imanbek's unpredicted success, from putting out an illegal remix on social media in 2019 to seeing it become an overnight global phenomenon, reflects the power shift in pop music from industry powerhouses to young audiences.

"Now, I need to prove that I'm not a one-hit wonder," the new Grammy winner told The New York Times in a 2020 interview.

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