

## Snap Shot | Transcript

### 1 American football's most iconic event

#### 1 g Super Bowl™ halftime shows

**Host:** If you're a musical artist, landing the Super Bowl halftime show is the ultimate gig. Los Angeles rapper and Pulitzer Prize winner Kendrick Lamar is the latest to be bestowed the honor. He'll perform at the 2025 Super Bowl in New Orleans, and he's got star power. But some are asking why the NFL picked someone without a direct connection to Louisiana. So we called up Melvin Villaver. He's a professor of performing arts at Clemson University, and he's researched what goes into creating a Super Bowl halftime show, speaking of fun gigs.

Good morning. So this is your research ...

**Melvin Villaver:** Hey, good morning! Yes ... not my direct research topic, but I'm very interested in American popular culture, music, Black music, things like that.

**Host:** So how is a Super Bowl halftime show performer selected?

**Melvin Villaver:** I can't speak for this year specifically. But the Super Bowl halftime show for Los Angeles and Las Vegas, two recent Super Bowls, has been the host city comes up with a short list. And they bring that to the NFL. The NFL has various boards, and, you know, someone who's on the board that's extremely famous is Jay-Z. And they have to agree. And so the host city brings the short list to the board. The board agrees and brings it back to the host city, saying, you know, we select this artist.

**Host:** OK. And so what's a recent example of how a host city decided who might be a good fit? Do they have to have a connection to the place?

**Melvin Villaver:** Yeah, Usher would be a great example of that for last year's Super Bowl in Las Vegas. Usher brings in so much to the Las Vegas economy and all of the antics and the things that he's doing in Las Vegas, and so he was at the top of the short list for Las Vegas. They brought it to the NFL. The NFL loved the idea, and that's how Usher became the headliner for last year's Super Bowl.

**Host:** So if Louisiana had Kendrick Lamar on their list, how does he fit into a Super Bowl halftime show in New Orleans?

**Melvin Villaver:** I don't know how this year's selection went specifically. However, I can draw inferences and connections based on, you know, my field of study and what I understand. And so, Kendrick Lamar, in his advertisement for his Super Bowl announcement, is standing or sitting in front of an American flag ... and he's, like, launching footballs outside with a football launcher that they use in practice. And I think he's trying to show his representation of Black America. And especially with everything that's gone on with the Kendrick Lamar and Drake beef in 2024, Kendrick has made a pronounced statement that he represents Black America proudly, unapologetically. And I think there's a connection there too with Kendrick and jazz music. If you listen to Kendrick's music and his body of work, he's very ... he's fused jazz into his repertoire. And New Orleans is considered the birthplace of jazz. And one last point I want to get at is New Orleans and Los Angeles are connected by the 10 Freeway, and I'm actually a son of Los Angeles, born and raised, and know a lot of people in Los Angeles who have roots in Louisiana and New Orleans specifically.

**Host:** Melvin Villaver is a professor of performing arts at Clemson University. Thank you for your time.

**Melvin Villaver:** Thank you so much. Take care.