

## Thousands Bid Farewell To Mac Dre

Written by Gza Genius ID351

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Thousands of fans, friends and family of Andre Hicks - aka -Mac Dre, gathered Tuesday at Fairfield's Mount Calvary Baptist Church to bid farewell to the 34-year-old underground rap star.

Those not in line to view the body of Andre Hicks, better known as gangsta rapper Mac Dre, milled around outside. The rapper's music blared from many of the hundreds of vehicles that crowded the large parking lot which typically serves the church and surrounding business complex.

About 60 law enforcement officers from Vallejo, Fairfield and Vacaville police departments and the Solano County Sheriff's Office were in the parking lot and surrounding neighborhood, in addition to plain-clothes officers.

Fairfield police spokesman Gary Rodgers said some people were drinking and smoking marijuana and "using the parking lot as a toilet," but those amounted only to minor nuisances. "It could have been a lot worse," he said.

Inside the church, Hicks' body lay in a platinum-plated stainless steel casket with a cardinal red crushed velvet interior. The casket was flanked by dozens of bouquets of various sizes, his face protected from unwanted touching and kissing by a specially designed clear fiberglass shield.

Donnell Williams, president of Oakland's Whitted Williams Funeral Home who produced the event, said it is not unusual for a celebrity's body to be protected in this way. The shield was removed for close family members such as Hicks' mother, Wanda Salvatto of Vallejo, who openly wept upon viewing her son's remains.

The line of those who came to say goodbye seemed to go on forever during the five-hour public visitation.

"It's like pilgrims," said Hicks' uncle Bernard Hicks of Vallejo. "This is the closest most of them have ever got to him."

Family members speculated about who might be responsible for Andre Hicks being shot to death in the early hours of Nov. 1 on a nearly deserted Kansas City, Mo. highway. Several suggested the promoter of the VIP party Hicks briefly attended that Sunday night, might have been involved. That promoter allegedly advertised a Mac Dre performance and sold tickets, but did not hire or pay the rapper to perform, police and family said.

"They should look to the guy who collected \$3,000," Bernard Hicks said. "I get calls from people crying, trying to ask me why?", and I can't tell them. I tell them to keep the faith and let the police find the answers."

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Bernard Hicks cited the number of fans who came to Tuesday's visitation as evidence of Mac Dre's influence.

"It will be a long time before a lot of people get over this," Bernard Hicks said.

Andre Hicks' father, Allen Hicks of San Francisco, said he's trying to fight an overwhelming sense of grief.

"It's difficult right now. It was too soon for him. He was a very special person to me and lots of others," Allen Hicks said. "He was my son and my sunshine."

As somber as the mood was inside the church Tuesday, outside a definite party atmosphere prevailed.

David Cobb, 20, said he came to Fairfield from San Jose "out of respect."

"(Mac Dre's) one of the Bay Area's best rappers. That's why I came," he said.

Twenty-five-year-old Dutch Master of Santa Rosa said he "came to see everything because I listen to his music."

"I love Mac Dre. He's the best," said Sola Gutierrez, 25, of San Francisco. "I came to tell him I love him and respect him. I saw him (in the casket) and he looked beautiful. It's Mac Dre Day. He's gonna be missed."