

ENTERTAINMENT

# R & B trio Next big hit at billboard awards

LAS VEGAS (AP)—Next was honored for being the next big thing in R&B as the trio came away with eight of the Billboard Music Awards, including best new artist of the year.

Garth Brooks and Celine Dion each picked up six awards Monday night during the ceremony at the MGM Grand Hotel.

Next also won the hot 100 single of the year for "Too Close," R&B single of the year, R&B singles artist of the year and hot 100 singles duo or group of the year. The group picked



NEXT

up more awards for new R&B artist of the year, R&B group of the year and R&B singles airplay track of the year.

Brooks won country artist of the year and Dion won album artist of the year.

Performers included Bette Midler, Whitney

Houston, Natalie Imbruglia, Shania Twain and Usher. Just the mention of the pop group Backstreet Boys had the teen girls in the audience screaming and yelling "I love you!" The reaction was so intense it drowned out the group's performance.

The Billboard Awards are determined by the magazine's year-end charts, which are based on a combination of record sales and radio airplay.

The winners were:

— Garth Brooks: country artist; country album and male album for "Sevens"; male albums artist; country singles artist; country albums artist.

— Celine Dion: album for "Titanic"; female album for "Let's Talk About Love"; soundtrack album for "Titanic"; soundtrack single for "My Heart Will Go On"; album artist and adult contemporary artist

— LeAnn Rimes: female country artist; contemporary Christian artist; contemporary Christian album; country singles sales artist

— Usher: artist of the year; hot 100 singles artist; R&B artist

— Shania Twain: female artist; hot 100 singles female artist; best-selling country single for "You're Still The One"

— Everclear, modern rock artist

— Jay-Z, R&B albums artist

— James Taylor, century award

— Marcy Playground, modern rock track for "Sex and Candy"

— Kenny Wayne Shepherd Band, rock track for "Blue on Black"

— Lord Tariq and Peter Gunz, rap single for "Deja Vu (Uptown Baby)"

— Mase, rap artist

— Natalie Imbruglia, adult top 40 track for "Torn"

— Lauryn Hill, R&B album for "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill"

— Backstreet Boys, group album for "Backstreet Boys"

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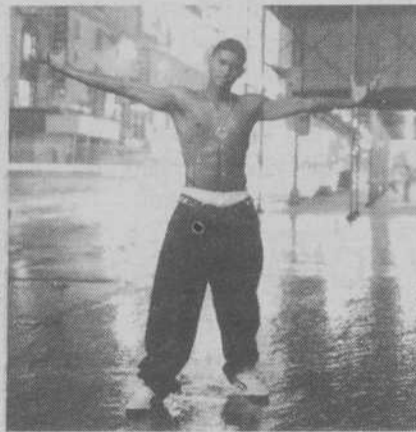
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USHER

# Soprano highlights holiday performance at UNLV

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Soprano Lisa Edwards-Burrs will perform at 3 p.m. Sunday inside UNLV's Artemus Ham Concert Hall, 4505 S. Maryland Parkway.

This will be the first Las Vegas appearance for Edwards-Burrs who has performed in various roles including "Blanche in Dialogues of the Carmelites," "Mimi in La Boheme" and "Monica in The Medium." She also has a compact disc to her credit called "What Songs Were Sung."

Edwards-Burrs is founder of BELLISSIMA!, an operatic quintet and promotes works by African-American composers via singing recitals.

Joining Edwards-Burrs will be the Southern Nevada Musical Arts Society Chorus, Singers and Orchestra. Under the direction of Dr. Douglas R. Peterson, the society will perform George F. Handel's "Messiah" and selections from Johann S. Bach's "Christmas Oratorio."

Other guest soloists include Steve Robinson and veteran Las Vegas performer Voltaire Verzosa and Travis Lewis, who is pursuing a master's degree in vocal performance at UNLV.

Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$7 for seniors, students, military and disabled, and can be purchased from the UNLV Performing Arts Box Office and by calling 895-3801 or Dillard's Ticket Service at 1-800-654-9545.



LISA EDWARDS-BURRS

# Will Smith's meteoric rise to superstardom just beginning

NEW YORK (AP) — According to the rules of physics — and Hollywood — everything that goes up must come down.

So after a string of career highs — a hit TV show, two blockbuster films and a multiplatinum rap career — Will Smith admits he's a "little nervous" with the release of his latest project, the thriller "Enemy of the State."

"I'm not missing too much," he said recently, as he sipped coffee at an upscale New York hotel. "Film after film I'm scoring and people are reacting well, so it's inevitable with any ups there are going to be downs. I'm trying to avoid them as much as I can."

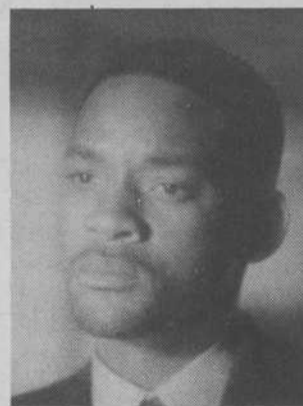
So far, he's doing a pretty good job. The Philadelphia native first made waves as part of the rap act DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince, then parlayed that success into the television series, "The Fresh Prince of Bel Air," which ended its six-year run in 1996.

Smith won acclaim with his debut role as a bisexual con artist in "Six Degrees of Separation," and showed some box-office swagger with the hit movie "Bad Boys," co-starring comedian Martin Lawrence.

But it wasn't until the blockbusters "Independence Day" and "Men in Black" that people finally began connecting Will Smith with superstardom — and box-office gold.

It's not surprising why Smith has vaulted to the top — he's the guy everyone wants as a friend. Tall (6 feet 2 inches) and attractive, Smith, who recently celebrated his 30th birthday, has an endearing personality and a great comic instinct. Those qualities, plus a killer smile, have endeared him to movie audiences worldwide in mostly supporting or sidekick performances.

Now, even though his



WILL SMITH

latest film stars Academy Award-winning actors Gene Hackman and Jon Voight, it is Smith who's the top draw.

Even Smith marvels at his current standing among Hollywood's elite.

"For six months I knew I

was going to be working with Gene Hackman and like the third day of shooting and I'm already on screen with Gene Hackman," he said. "So, we did our first take, and he leans over to me and says (Smith does his best Hackman impression), 'That was a good job there, son.' And that kind of inspired me, and I was like, 'OK, we've gotten over that hump.'"

"Enemy of the State," features Smith as a successful lawyer who unwittingly becomes a target of rogue agents who believe he has evidence that implicates them in a murder. It features conspiracy theories, high-tech spying, car chases galore

and the inevitable movie explosion.

It is produced by Jerry Bruckheimer, whose movie credits read like one long car chase and/or explosion: "The Rock," "Beverly Hills Cop" and "Top Gun," the latter of which starred Tom Cruise. Actually, Cruise was the first choice for Smith's role, but he was busy shooting Stanley Kubrick's "Eyes Wide Shut," which has been shooting for the past year and a half.

"I don't have any problems taking Tom Cruise's seconds," Smith says with a laugh. "I will eat off of Tom Cruise's cinematic plate any day of the week."

An even greater sign of

Smith's mainstream success may be his future role in Barry Sonnenfeld's movie version of the "The Wild Wild West" in which Smith was cast as James West. Back in old TV series, West was a white man played by Robert Conrad. Even Smith was surprised when Sonnenfeld, who produced "Men in Black," called on Smith for the film.

"I'm saying to him, 'Barry, I'm black,' and he's like, 'No one cares that you're black, no one cares.' And in a way I think he's correct about that," he said. "It's a weird dichotomy because no one cares and everyone cares at the same time."

(See Smith, Page 9)

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\*Billboard Magazines New Guitar Sensation\*

**"Josh Smith & The Frost"**

SATURDAY	Dec. 12th	Southern California's "Faultline"	9pm-2am
LATE NIGHT BLUES	FRIDAY & SATURDAY	Moody Scott & First Class	2am-5:40am
SUNDAY	Dec. 13th	Charlie Tuna's Good Cookin' Band	10pm-2am
MONDAY	Dec. 14th	Al Ek & All-Star Jammin' Session	10pm-2am
TUESDAY	Dec. 15th	Jimmy Mack Blues Attack	10pm-2am
WEDNESDAY	Dec. 16th	The Ruffnecks	10pm-2am

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