

ENTERTAINMENT

Entertainment Briefs

TAVIS SMILEY TO HOST
LATE-NIGHT TALK SHOW

LOS ANGELES (AP) - Fans of National Public Radio talk-show host Tavis Smiley soon will be able to see as well as hear him. Smiley will host a new PBS late-night talk show beginning in January 2004, according to KCET/Hollywood, the Los Angeles public television station that will produce the program. "The Tavis Smiley Show" will offer a mix of news and pop culture coverage, KCET said. It will air weeknights as part of the PBS lineup that includes "The Charlie Rose Show." "Our series will cover everything, politics, money, relationships, race, class, culture and more," Smiley said in a statement. "If it's being discussed - or better yet, if it's not - we'll be talking about it and we'll be breaking news." On his NPR show, Smiley's guests have ranged from President George W. Bush to actress Halle Berry. Before joining NPR, he was the host of "BET Tonight with Tavis Smiley" on Black Entertainment Television.

RAPPER MYSTIKAL WINS
COPYRIGHT CASE

NEW ORLEANS (AP) - Grammy-nominated rapper Mystikal did not break copyright laws when he used two Cajun sayings in one of his songs, a federal appeals court has ruled. Emanation Inc. sued Mystikal's record label, Zomba Recording Inc., in 2001 claiming it owned the copyright to the phrases. Emanation makes a hand-held toy called "Cajun in Your Pocket" that plays several Cajun phrases, and got a copyright for the word arrangements on Dec. 13, 2000. The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled Wednesday that Mystikal, whose real name is Michael Tyler, did not infringe on the company's copyright in his 2000 song "Shake Ya Ass." The appeals court agreed with a district judge, ruling that the sayings - "We gon pass a good time, yeah, cher," and "You gotta suck da head on dem der crawfish" - are not original and therefore are not protected under copyright laws. Mystikal's record "Tarantula" was nominated for a best rap album Grammy in January.

RUBEN STUDDARD TO
PERFORM FREE CONCERTS

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) - "American Idol" winner Ruben Studdard, known as "The Velvet Teddy Bear," will perform two free concerts in his native Alabama on behalf of a tax referendum backed by one of his biggest fans, Gov. Bob Riley. The 8,800 free tickets for the Sept. 2 concert in Mobile ran out in 30 minutes, and 10,000 were distributed in 17 minutes in Birmingham for a Sept. 5 concert in Studdard's hometown. Studdard's band, Just a Few Cats, and comedian Ced Delaney are also scheduled to perform. The "Believe in Alabama" concerts were organized to promote the Republican governor's tax increase proposals on the Sept. 9 ballot. However, Studdard has not yet said whether he endorses Riley's proposals. Studdard received a \$1 million recording contract for beating out runner-up Clay Aiken on the final segment of "American Idol" in May. A 39-show tour ends Aug. 31, and his album is due out in mid-September.

ESSENCE MUSIC FESTIVAL TO
BE BROADCAST ON TELEVISION

For the first time in its nine-year history, the Essence Music Festival will be aired on television. The two-hour show, "The 2003 Essence Music Festival: A Television Special," will air 8 to 10 p.m. EDT, Friday, Sept. 12 on UPN. Comedian-actor Steve Harvey will host the event, which will feature performances by Ashanti, Erykah Badu, Faith Evans, The Gap Band, Jaheim, Chaka Khan, Patti LaBelle, Gerald Levert, LL Cool J, Mo'Nique, Musiq, Tamia, Usher, The Luther Vandross Band and Stevie Wonder. Known as a "party with a purpose," the three-day music festival is the largest gathering of African-Americans in the nation, attracting 200,000 visitors to New Orleans over the Fourth of July weekend. The event features empowerment seminars, the Essence Marketplace and the Essence Boutique, capped by great musical performances in the Louisiana Superdome.

Drama disguised as mystery in 'Dirty'

By Kam Williams
Special to Sentinel-Voice

In 1998, Peter Berg directed a claustrophobic cult hit entitled *Very Bad Things*, set in Las Vegas, a crime thriller which revolved around the fallout for the participants in a hotel bachelor party after the accidental killing of a call girl during the festivities. Now we have, *Dirty Pretty Things*, directed by Stephen Frears (*My Beautiful Laundrette*), with not only a similar sounding title, but also the same point of departure, an untimely death involving a prostitute at a hotel, in this case, one located in London.

Fortunately, that's where the resemblance between the two movies ends, as Frears has fashioned a far more sophisticated whodunit, one which simultaneously serves up an equally inscrutable love story, while commenting on the dystopia that is present-day England's illegal-immigrant subculture. From this picture's point of view, London is a city overrun by an influx of foreigners from all parts of the Third World, easily-exploited, minimum-wage slaves who must rely on a combination of a Black market economy, the charity of strangers, and their own cunning just to make ends meet.

It is against this backdrop that *Dirty Pretty Things* unfolds, suggesting that some of those not caught by the



Audrey Tautou, left, and Chiwetel Ejiofor star in the melodrama "Dirty Things Pretty."

Melting Pot's shadowy safety net must turn to desperate measures most of us would consider unthinkable. The film stars Audrey Tautou, the French ingenue who first wowed audiences in 1999 with her Cesar-winning performance as a young beautiful being stalked by an amorous, elderly widower in the bittersweet *Venus Beauty Institute*.

The next year, Tautou had another impressive outing in *Happenstance*, though she really only caught America's eye for her work as the wide-eyed, waifish title character in the readily-digestible *Amelie*, the modern fable which was nominated for five Academy Awards, including Best Foreign Film. Here, the actress exhibits the extraordinary range of her talent in

the role of hotel maid Senay, an unmarried Turkish virgin, unlawfully employed and ever-vigilant to keep a step ahead of the immigration authorities.

Although, as Senay explains, she escaped Turkey because, "I do not want to live like my mother," she remains psychologically constrained by repressive Old World mores. So, she goes to great lengths to keep up a chaste image, allowing Okwe, her would-be boyfriend, to live with her on the condition that he not let others in on their budding romantic liaison.

Chiwetel Ejiofor co-stars as Okwe, a dignified Nigerian refugee who is a cabbie by day, a hotel receptionist by night. But because back in his homeland, he was a medi-

cal doctor, he now finds his services still in demand from other illegals who dare not risk entering a hospital for fear of discovery and deportation.

Okwe and Senay both work at the upscale Baltic Hotel, where an Upstairs, Downstairs-like cleaving of rich from poor has left its foreign-born employees to function in their own, invisible underworld which operates in accordance with its own set of rules. There's Ivan (Zlatko Buric), the Russian doorman who has learned to look the other way, when appropriate, while atop the pecking order sits Juan (Sergio Lopez), the corrupt general manager from Spain, a sneak who can forge a passport for the right price.

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Jackson opens his Neverland Ranch

LOS ANGELES - Like a real-life Willy Wonka, pop star Michael Jackson has announced plans to temporarily open his carnival-style Neverland Ranch estate to 500 guests.

The invitation-only event, set for Sept. 13, is a one-time-only gathering, complete with dinner, magicians, games and a tractor-trailer full of stuffed animals, according to Jackson publicist Stuart Backerman.

Tickets for two people cost \$5,000, with \$1,000 from each sale being divided among three charities, he added.

Woman sues 'P. Diddy' over restaurant flap

NEW YORK - A Queens woman has filed a \$5 million lawsuit against rapper-producer Sean "P. Diddy" Combs, claiming a bouncer at his Manhattan restaurant threw her to the ground and dragged her on the pavement.

Stephanie Grieson said that as she stood outside Justin's on Aug. 22, 2002,

having an argument with a friend that became physical, the bouncer grabbed her by the neck and dragged her down the sidewalk, saying: "No fighting in front of this restaurant," The New York Post reported Tuesday.

Grieson, 35, said she was left with wounds on both knees, which remained swollen

for days, and still has scars on her legs and ankles.

The lawsuit, filed in Queens Supreme Court, seeks damages to cover lost wages, medical bills, pain and suffering, and future plastic surgery.

Benjamin Brafman, Combs' lawyer, told the Post: "This lady is in for a rude

table donation will be split between the Make-A-Wish Foundation for sick children; Oneness, dedicated to erasing racism through art and music; and E Ai Como E Que Fica, a Rio de Janeiro group that provides food, clothing and medical care to impoverished children.

Jackson's former financial advisers settled a lawsuit against him in June that suggested he was overburdened with debt and near bankruptcy. That has led to speculation that the Neverland property, recently assessed at \$12.3 million, would be placed on the market.

awakening because unlike other superstars, Puffy fights these lawsuits."

Combs was also the subject of a lawsuit earlier this month.

Two men sued him for \$25 million each, claiming that a security team at the rap mogul's recording studio attacked them for no reason.