

ENTERTAINMENT

Entertainment Briefs

KNIGHT BEING SUED BY
SNOOP DOGG'S MOM

LOS ANGELES (AP) - Snoop Dogg's mother and rapper Daz Dillinger's wife have sued Marion "Suge" Knight for allegedly slandering them in a song he produced. Beverly Green and Maria Watkins filed the lawsuit against the rap mogul Tuesday in Superior Court. They claim the song "Tha Row," from the movie soundtrack for "Dysfunkcional Family," contains graphic lyrics saying Knight was sleeping with Watkins, the wife of rapper Delmar "Daz" Dillinger Arnaud. The lyrics said Knight fathered her unborn child, a claim which resulted in Arnaud divorcing his wife and insisting on a paternity test, according to the lawsuit. The song also states that Knight was sleeping with Green, a Baptist minister who's Snoop Dogg's mother and Arnaud's aunt. Watkins and Green claim Knight is retaliating against them after Arnaud sued Knight in civil court. Knight, the co-founder of the pioneering rap label Death Row Records, is serving a 10-month prison sentence for violating his parole and striking a Hollywood nightclub valet. A call to Knight's lawyer and publicist after hours Wednesday was not returned.

JACKSON BROTHER CLAIMS
SINGER MISTREATED

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. (AP) - Michael Jackson's brother said the pop star was physically mistreated while in custody of the Santa Barbara Sheriff's Department. Department officials disputed the claim and the entertainer's spokesman would not comment on it. Jermaine Jackson told MSNBC in an interview broadcast Thursday that his brother has proof that "he was very much mistreated." He declined to give specifics, saying only, "The pictures will show you everything." Chris Pappas, spokesman for the sheriff's department, said the singer was treated "with courtesy and professionalism throughout the process," and no complaint had been filed. Jackson spokesman Stuart Backerman told KCAL-TV of Los Angeles on Friday that he wouldn't comment about Jermaine Jackson's accusation. He said only that Michael Jackson was "holding up fine. He's doing well." Michael Jackson, 45, turned himself in Nov. 20 on suspicion of molesting a boy at his Neverland Ranch outside Los Olivos. He has denied the allegation and was released on \$3 million bail. He has not been charged.

ACTOR TAYE DIGGS JOINING
WIFE IN 'WICKED'

NEW YORK (AP) - Taye Diggs is joining his wife, Idina Menzel, in the Broadway musical "Wicked" on Christmas night for a four-week run. Diggs will play Fiyero, the romantic lead in the show, which is based on Gregory Maguire's cult novel about the two witches of Oz. Menzel and Kristin Chenoweth star as the witches and Joel Grey plays the Wizard of Oz. The 32-year-old actor replaces Norbert Leo Butz, who's on a leave of absence because of a back injury. Diggs will appear in "Wicked" through Jan. 18. Until he joins the cast, Butz' understudy, Kristoffer Cusick, will play Fiyero. Butz returns to the musical Jan. 20. Diggs previously played lawyer Billy Flynn on Broadway in "Chicago" and appeared in "Rent." His films include the movie version of "Chicago" and "How Stella Got Her Groove Back."

OPRAH WINFREY INVITES
LETTERMAN ON HER SHOW

NEW YORK (AP) - The "Super Bowl of Love" will go on after all: Oprah Winfrey has invited David Letterman to be a guest on her show. Letterman had been begging Winfrey to appear on the CBS "Late Show," which she said she wouldn't do again because she felt uncomfortable during her previous two appearances. Now, in an apparent attempt at resolving their public feud, Winfrey has asked him to appear on her syndicated daytime program. "What we're hearing now is that Oprah no longer hates me," Letterman said on the episode airing at 11:35 p.m. EST Friday. "And what we're hearing now - and while I'm gratified on the one hand, I'm a little concerned about this - we're hearing that Oprah is actually inviting me to appear on her show." A spokeswoman for Winfrey's show confirmed Friday that the talk show host had extended an invitation to Letterman, but could provide no further details.

Morgan shapes sitcom on family values

NEW YORK (AP) - Viewers who love Tracy Morgan's new sitcom as well as anyone who isn't so gung-ho can all agree on one thing: It feels mighty familiar.

Bingo, Morgan replies. That was the idea.

"I was thinking about old-fashioned television," he explains, "when the whole family was in the living room: 'It's about to come on! It's about to come on!'"

"I'd been playing outrageous characters on 'Saturday Night Live' for (seven) years and I wanted to show the people something that's close to me: 'Wow, this dude is a father and a husband, as opposed to Brian Fellows and Astronaut Jones and all that.'"

His co-stars on "The Tracy Morgan Show" (8 p.m. EST Tuesdays on NBC) include John Witherspoon and Heavy D, who play mechanics at the garage Tracy's character owns, and Katt Williams as a quippy layabout.

But every family man needs a mate. Tamala Jones was cast as Alicia, Tracy Mitchell's charming, level-headed wife and the mother of their sons, 13-year-old Derrick (Marc John Jefferies) and 7-year-old Jimmy (Bobb'e J. Thompson).

The show's patriarch met Jones while they were filming the Chris Rock comedy "Head of State."

"We kicked it off really well," says Morgan, grinning



Tracy Morgan as Tracy Mitchell, left, and Tamala Jones as Alicia Mitchell appear in this scene from NBC's "The Tracy Morgan Show," in this undated publicity photo.

at her seated beside him. "I had her laughing -"

"The whoooole time!" she chimes in. "- and she responded to my silliness. Then when we started the show, she said, 'Well, how you want this done?' I said, 'You are the backbone of this show! You are the Queen Bee!'"

"I looked to see who do I know who's the Queen Bee?" says Jones. First on her list: "My grandmother! And then I watched Alice on 'The Hon-ey-mooners,' Lucille Ball, 'Claudine'" - the 1974 film, a favorite of Morgan's, star-

ring Diahann Carroll as a single mother of six children in Harlem.

"I told her, 'I want you to be a strong sister!'" Morgan says. "When Tracy Mitchell gets a little out there, his wife brings him back. She's his reason. Same as Tracy Morgan. My wife and my kids" - Morgan, 35, has three teenage sons with Sabina, his high-school sweetheart - "are MY reason."

"I speak to Tracy's wife quite often about how she would address certain situations with him," Jones con-

fides. "She says, 'Pop him up side of the head.'"

"Or give him a hug," Morgan sweet-talks. "The show is set on Fordham Road in the Bronx ... but there's love in the ghetto!"

"We live in the ghetto?" asks Jones, a Pasadena native, clearly caught by surprise.

"It sure ain't the suburbs!" cackles Morgan, who grew up in New York's inner city. Then, growing serious, he recalls, "When I was 6 years old, my dad left the house, left my mom with five kids to raise. One of the reasons why I got so funny is because, out of all my siblings, I think I took it the hardest. My sense of humor was a defense mechanism."

"My father was not around at all," echoes Jones. "My mom was a single mother and she had to work, and I basically raised my two brothers."

"Now, Tamala has to deal with the fact that she has to trust me," Morgan points out. "When a young girl's dad is not there, it has a profound effect on every man she's ever gonna have a relationship with" - even how she relates with her TV husband.

Jones nods in agreement.

"I've gone through a lot of self-help books," she says, "to be centered and grounded and understand how that's an issue that I need to change

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