

Combs wins coveted fashion award

NEW YORK (AP) - Sean "P. Diddy" Combs finally got what he's craved from the fashion industry: respect — and a little thing called a CFDA award.

The Council of Fashion Designers of America named Combs the top menswear designer of the year for his Sean John collection at its annual awards show Monday night; he beat veterans and previous winners Ralph Lauren and Michael Kors.

This was Combs' first win despite four previous nominations.

"I'm very happy as you can see," said Combs, who danced his way up to the podium at the New York Public Library. "I've had some things I've had on my mind for a few years." He didn't hold a grudge, though.

First, Combs, wearing a white tuxedo jacket, told the audience of fellow designers, models, fashion editors, stylists and retailers that years ago he stood in the Ralph Lauren store "saving my pennies" for a new Polo shirt. "I am living the American dream." Then, he shouted, "Ralph, you're still the sexiest man on the planet!"

Carolina Herrera was honored as the best womenswear designer of the year, and Reed



Zac Posen, winner of the Swarovski's Perry Ellis award for Ready-to-Wear clothing, left, and hip-hop mogul/clothing company owner Sean Combs, winner of the Menswear Designer of the Year award, right, celebrate backstage at the 2004 Council for Fashion Designers of America Fashion Awards held in the New York Public Library on Monday.

Krakoff, Coach's president and executive creative director, was picked as the top accessories designer.

Sarah Jessica Parker was toasted as this year's "fashion icon," following in the Manolo Blahnik footsteps of Nicole Kidman and C.Z. Guest.

"I think they made up this award just in case she (Parker) came along," gushed Isaac Mizrahi as he presented the former "Sex and the City" star with her award.

Parker, wearing a hot pink and Black lace vintage halter dress by the late Hollywood costumer Howard Greer, said she was "thrilled."

"Fashion is my fatal flaw. It's my weakness. Sometimes you see something you want and you can't have it, but in my case ..." she trailed off to laughter from the crowd.

"Sarah Jessica Parker represents the fact that high fashion — which had been divorced from reality for a while — is now a little more en-

twined with what people are wearing," said Glamour editor in chief Cindi Leive.

The CFDA awards, now in their 23rd year, has increasingly put an emphasis on the close relationship between fashion stars and celebrities. Natalie Portman showed up on the arm of Zac Posen, the winner of a Swarovski-Perry Ellis award for emerging talent, and Martha Stewart accompanied

(See P. Diddy, Page 8)

NY music academy fetes DanceAfrica

NEW YORK (AP) - With artistic director Chuck Davis holding court, DanceAfrica rolled back into town for its 27th annual celebration.

"A Dancer's Path: Ancient Traditions, Modern Trends" entertained a lively audience at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. When "founding Elder" Davis took the stage for the Jalibah, or traditional greeting, those few folks who had not yet experienced a DanceAfrica festival understood they were in for a different kind of dance experience.

There were the hugs to strangers commanded by Davis. There was the tribute to those who had "made the transition to the Ancestral Grounds." And there was Shaka Zulu, a traditional African stilt dancer who just joined Cirque de Soleil, who wandered onto stage throughout the evening to strut and shimmy his stuff.

Lofty title aside, a carnivallike feel permeated the show, which built on the performances of four groups - the American troupes Bambara Drum and Dance Ensemble, Ezibu Muntu African Dance Company and BAM/Restoration DanceAfrica Ensemble, and Ghana's Nii Tettey Tetteh and the Kusun Ensemble.

The Ghanaian performers were the strongest at Friday night's performance, Tetteh leading a tight group of drummers as five dancers leapt, spun and gyrated, all the while smiling at the appreciative audience.

If the other companies, including the BAM/Restoration youngsters, sometimes lacked finesse, they made up for it in exuberance. Shell decorations and colorful head-dresses flew off the dancers as they sped through large group patterns, individual performers sometimes losing themselves in frenzied movement.

Davis reminded the audience during the Jalibah: "We are not human beings having a spiritual experience, we are spiritual beings having a human experience."

Chambers

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dent. "We knew it was going to be good, but it went way beyond our expectations. Saito thinks one direct effect will be government entities seeing the "sheer power of everybody coming together." The event will foster a greater "awareness anytime issues come up about diversity," he said.

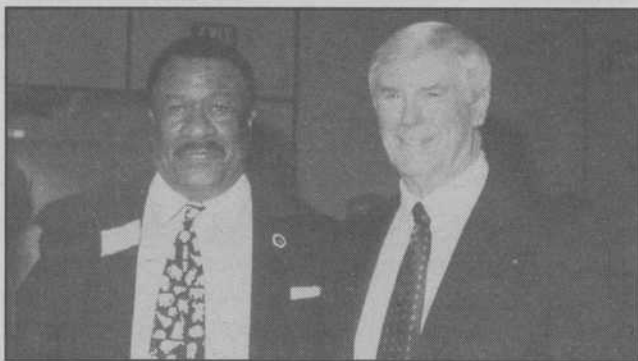
Ida Gaines, longtime resident and politically active community member, spoke about the significance of "political leverage" as a desirable result from the event. She encouraged the continuance of combined chamber efforts in order to "make a difference" in future political arenas.

Diane Pollard, of Rainbow Medical Centers and UCC board member, urged the groups to continue to meet for "better communications." She hopes business leaders see the "value of diversity" and "take a serious look" at the concerns of every group.

A steady stream of superlatives came from guests throughout the luncheon and afterward.

Countless times the words "incredible," "fantastic" and "wonderful," were used to describe the event.

It was "completely amazing," said Punam Mathur, vice



Sentinel-Voice photo by Randy Merritt

Environmental consultant William Frank Smith chats with Gov. Kenny Guinn after the governor's keynote address.

president of corporate diversity and community affairs for MGM-Mirage. It is "uplifting" and wants it (the unity) to stay visible, not fade away.

Eloiza Martinez, president of LCC, said the joint meeting would bring changes.

"It's time for the other side to (take notice)," she said. "Too much lip-service" takes place. "Now that (they) see us together, there will be more awareness." Cornelius Eason, president of Priority Staffing USA, named three primary benefits he'd like to see as a result of the event. They are "greater opportunities in procurement for minority businesses," "higher employment and workforce development" and "political empowerment, especially increased voter participation."

"It's long overdue," said Lois Green, senior vice-presi-

dent marketing and community development for Bank West of Nevada. It's "an honor" to "come together to celebrate who we are."

"We are all equal in God's eyes," Green stressed.

The joint luncheon was a good opportunity for prospective members to learn about all three chambers. Some belong to more than one chamber. How many was not immediately known. Combined membership of the three chambers is estimated at around 3,000. Each chamber holds regular meetings for members and those interested in joining.

Meeting schedules are posted on Web sites. For the UCC go to www.urbanchamberlv.org or call (702) 648-6222. ACC go to www.lvacc.com or call (702) 737-4300. LCC go to www.lasvegaslatince.com or call (702) 385-7367.

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