

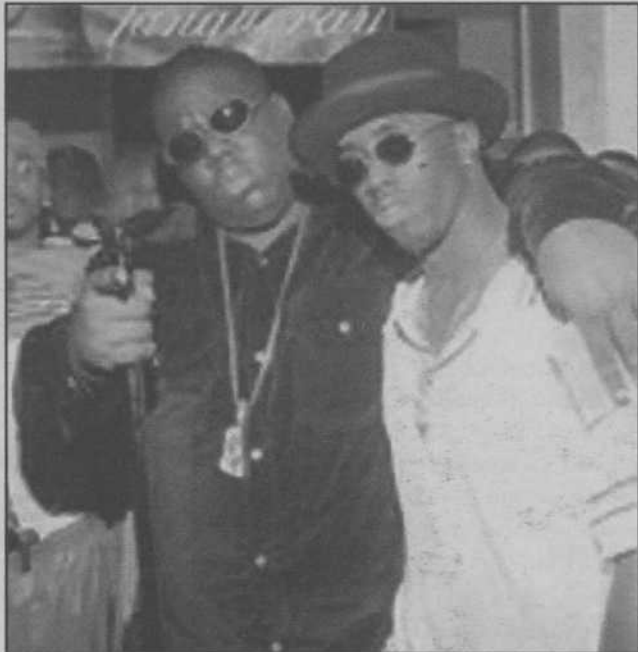
Rapper's estate presses cop lawsuit

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The estate of the Notorious B.I.G.'s (Christopher Wallace) won a legal victory last month in its ongoing wrongful death lawsuit against the Los Angeles Police Department.

MTV.com reports that a judge has cleared the way for the case to go to trial on October 5 after ruling that former police officer David Mack could have been operating "under the color of law," which means committing an act with the authority of the law although he wasn't on duty on the night that he and an accomplice allegedly orchestrated the murder of the rap star.

The Notorious B.I.G. was murdered outside of the Petersen Automotive Museum on March 9, 1997, and his estate believes that Mack was involved and that the L.A.P.D. could have done more to prevent his death. The lawsuit, which was filed in 2002 in U.S. District Court



Christopher Wallace, known as the Notorious B.I.G., left, with Bad Boy CEO Sean Combs in Los Angeles on the night Wallace was gunned down by a still-uncaptured assailant.

for the Central District Of California, alleges that "defendant police commissioner Bernard Parks intentionally, willfully, and recklessly delayed and stopped the investigation as soon as it became apparent officers employed

by the Los Angeles Police Department were involved in the murder."

According to former L.A.P.D. detective Russell Poole, Chief Parks, the head of Rampart, instructed him to leave it alone since Mack was already incarcerated for a bank robbery.

Mack and two accomplices robbed a Los Angeles bank of more than \$722,000 using police scanners and radios. Mack was apprehended, but his two accomplices and the money were never found. The former officer is currently serving a 14-year jail sentence.

The L.A.P.D. attempted to have the lawsuit dismissed on the grounds that Mack was not on duty on the night of the

murder but Judge Florence Marie Cooper ruled on June 30 that the fact that Mack wasn't on duty wasn't controlling as to whether or not he operated under color of law.

Cooper's ruling read in part, "The investigation into Wallace's murder indicates that the suspects had access to non-public information that would have been available only to police officers, including the surveillance of the rapper, the composition and location of police officers at the Petersen Automotive Museum where the rapper was attending an afterparty for the *Soul Train Awards*, tactics used by the police in protecting large events, tactical frequencies used by police radios, the location of the rapper's car and his exit plan, and how the police officers would respond to the shooting."

Cooper added, "In addition, it appeared that police radios were used to monitor the location and response of law enforcement to the shooting, as well as to facilitate escaping after the shooting, concealing the vehicle, and disposing of the weapon."

Also named as defendants in the lawsuit are former L.A.P.D. chiefs Willie Williams and Bayan Lewis, and former police officer Mack and Amir Muhammad, a man some believe was the triggerman in Notorious B.I.G.'s murder, although he was never formally charged.

Remastered album offers better Biggie

"The first time I heard his voice, I knew he was the greatest rapper to ever live." — Sean 'P. Diddy' Combs

Special to Sentinel-Voice

NEW YORK — Bad Boy Records released the digitally re-mastered version of the late Notorious B.I.G.'s groundbreaking debut album, "Ready To Die" (originally released in 1994) on Tuesday.

"Ready To Die" is considered a hip-hop classic and has sold over 4 million copies. The remastered CD is being released as a special thank you from Sean "P. Diddy" Combs to Ms. Voletta Wallace.

The digitally re-mastered "Ready To Die" will feature a crisper and clearer sound compared to the original CD. The CD/DVD features Notorious B.I.G. classics such as "Unbelievable" and "The What" (featuring Method Man) and music videos including "Juicy," "One More Chance," "Big Poppa" and the long cinematic version of "Warning." The DVD also includes a never before seen live outdoor performance of "Unbelievable" at Outkast's Atlanta barbecue. The CD contains previously unreleased tracks including "Dreams" and "Who Shot Ya?" Until now fans haven't been able to purchase these songs commercially.

The Notorious B.I.G. was the first rapper signed to Sean "P. Diddy" Combs' Bad Boy Entertainment label in 1993. After guesting on Mary J. Blige's "Real Love" remix and Supercat's "Dolly My Baby," remix, B.I.G. released his hip-hop classic "Ready To Die."

The CD produced Top 10 hits including "Juicy," "One More Chance," and "Big Poppa" which was voted Billboard's Single of the year.

B.I.G.'s success was cut short after he was slain on March 9, 1997 at the age of 25 in Los Angeles. Three weeks later his second CD, "Life After Death" (a double CD), was released and sold over 10 million copies.

In 1999, Bad Boy Records released "Born Again" a CD that featured digital recording and editing of new B.I.G. vocals alongside various artists including Method Man, Juvenile, Lil' Kim and Eminem.

To date, "Ready To Die" is the highest selling hip-hop catalogue ever.

In total, the Notorious B.I.G. has sold an excess of 20 million CDs worldwide and is still regarded as one of the greatest MC's to ever live by the hip-hop community.

Will Smith

(Continued from Page 6)

Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince, Smith defied expectations by scoring with the television hit "The Fresh Prince of Bel Air."

Smith encountered similar skepticism when he moved to the big screen but silenced critics with hit after hit. His moves into meatier drama on "The Legend of Bagge Vance" and "Ali" failed to bring in crowds, but Smith's acting chops were a revelation for fans who had pigeonholed him as just an on-screen wiseguy.

"I view pigeonholes as good things, because that means you catch people blind," Smith said. "The one thing I learned in boxing is, the best thing that can happen is you get pigeonholed, that your opponent thinks you only throw two lefts then a right. Then you suddenly mix it up on him."

With a cameo role in this year's "Jersey Girl," Smith poked fun at himself and the low expectations people once had for him.

In a scene set in the mid-1990s, Ben Affleck's character, a music publicist, heaps scorn on the idea that the Fresh Prince would ever have a movie career to speak of.

"He's a multitasking guy. He's got immense energy. He's a dynamo. He works like crazy and loves what he does. He really enjoys every aspect of what he does," said "I, Robot" director Alex Proyas. "It seems like a lot of actors sort of find their little niche and stick to it, where Will is all about trying something new each time."

Come fall, Smith provides the lead voice to the undersea animated comedy "Shark Tale," about a small fry who becomes a big fish when he falsely takes credit for doing in a great White that was the son of the local mob boss. The voice cast includes Robert De Niro, Martin Scorsese, Angelina Jolie and Jack Black.

Smith's wife, Jada Pinkett Smith, also is trying the cartoon game, providing the voice of a hippo for next year's animated adventure "Madagascar." The family flicks, along with the PG-13-rated "I, Robot," are welcome news to the couple's young son and daughter and Smith's son from a previous marriage.

The children were shut out of the couple's R-rated offerings last year, Will Smith in "Bad Boys II" and Jada Pinkett Smith in "The Matrix Reloaded" and "The Matrix Revolutions."

"My son said to me, 'Daddy, I thought the reason that we put up with this was so we can see the stuff,'" Smith said. "So I said, 'OK, you're right.' Now I've got a couple in a row that the kids can see."

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