

Entertainment Briefs

RAP LABEL BOOKKEEPER
INDICTED ON CHARGES

NEW YORK (AP) - The bookkeeper for rap label Murder Inc. was indicted on money laundering charges by federal prosecutors who are probing ties between drug dealers and the home of such platinum-selling acts as Ja Rule and Ashanti. Cynthia Brent, 39, was arrested at her New Jersey home Monday and was charged with laundering drug proceeds and structuring cash deposits to avoid federal reporting requirements. The laundering charges involve more than \$1 million in drug money, according to the indictment against her. Brent pleaded not guilty at her arraignment Monday afternoon, and she was released on \$200,000 bond. Her lawyer declined to comment on the case. Murder Inc. changed its name to The Inc. earlier this year after executives said the label's image was hurt by court filings alleging that they had been laundering drug money from a Queens crack dealer, Kenneth "Supreme" McGriff. Federal officials also have linked McGriff to several drug-related murders, according to court filings. McGriff is serving time on a gun offense but has not been charged with the murders. McGriff's attorney has denied the allegations. Assistant U.S. Attorney Carolyn Pokorny declined to comment on the case.

BRANDY LOOKING FOR
NEW RECORD LABEL

NEW YORK (AP) - Brandy is looking for a new record label. Brandy, 25, split from her longtime label, Atlantic Records, her publicist, Courtney Barnes, announced Monday. The departure came after relatively disappointing sales of her last album, "Afrodisiac." Although the album generated the moderate hit "Talk About Our Love" with Kanye West, it disappeared quickly from the charts. It was a departure from her previous three albums, all of which sold at least 1 million copies. Barnes says Brandy is looking at other labels and also plans to be co-executive producer of a comedy series for Fox television next year.

P. DIDDY'S ACTIVIST GROUP
TO STAY INVOLVED

NEW YORK (AP) - P. Diddy's "Vote or Die!" initiative lives on. Sean "P. Diddy" Combs, who started the group Citizen Change to increase voter turnout among young people for the Nov. 2 presidential election, told The Associated Press the group will continue to be involved in politics. "This is phase one, step one for us to get people engaged," said Combs, who celebrated his 35th birthday last Thursday. "I'm trying to set up an infrastructure of empowerment and understanding power." The group — with the slogan "Vote or Die!" — enlisted celebrities such as Mary J. Blige, Leonardo DiCaprio and Ben Affleck to boost the youth vote, and in the last days of the campaign, chartered a jet to visit swing states. Exit polls showed fewer than one in 10 voters Tuesday were ages 18 to 24, about the same proportion of the electorate as in 2000. However, since voter turnout was higher overall, more young people actually voted.

COSBY CREATES SCHOLARSHIP
FOR UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS

AMHERST, Mass. (AP) - The University of Massachusetts has entertainer Bill Cosby — one of its most famous graduates — to thank for helping raise \$1.5 million for a new program aimed at giving scholarships to students from the poorer communities around the university. A bulk of the money comes from a benefit concert that Cosby gave at his alma mater Friday. Ticket sales and the price of admission to a pre-performance dinner generated \$444,000, and university officials say individuals have contributed \$541,000 to the Amherst campus for new scholarship funds. The state is matching the contribution with about \$383,000, officials said. If the program is successful, it will be open to students from other poorer communities in the region, he said. "We want to say this is a place that reaches out to people living in depressed areas," Cosby said. "That this university has open arms for all Americans as a state school should." Cosby said his hope is that students selected for the awards would teach in schools in economically depressed areas for at least two years after their graduation.

ENTERTAINMENT

'Idol' alumnus tries to rev up career

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Justin Guarini changed his hair, changed his home, changed his management. The one thing he didn't change was his luck.

The former "American Idol" singer, looking to rebound from movie and record flops, has seen his Broadway debut fizzle before it began, deleted from the cast of the yet-to-open Beach Boys-tuned musical, "Good Vibrations."

Producers and Guarini were described as having "parted company," reports said Tuesday.

A spokesman for Dodger Stage Holding, one of the groups producing "Good Vibrations," did not return calls seeking further comment Wednesday.

"Good Vibrations," a fictional, fun-in-the-sun tale set to the music of the Beach Boys, is scheduled to begin previews at Broadway's Eugene O'Neill Theatre on Dec. 20. Opening night is set for Jan. 27.



"I'm really excited. New York is definitely where I need to be at this point in my career, and the opportunity to be on Broadway is once in a lifetime."

—Justin Guarini

Guarini, recently shorn of his signature floppy curls and relocated from Los Angeles to the East Coast, appeared with the show this past summer at Vassar College in New York.

It was only a week ago that Guarini's camp issued a press release touting his casting in the musical's Broadway company.

"I'm up for the challenge," Guarini was quoted as saying (while "flashing his trademark smile," no less). "I'm really excited. New York is definitely where I need to be

at this point in my career, and the opportunity to be on Broadway is once in a lifetime."

Guarini, 26, almost made it to Broadway in "The Lion King" in 2001, but pursued an audition with a new, "Star Search"-style TV show instead.

The decision paid off: The show, "American Idol," was an instant ratings hit; Guarini was an instant pop-culture player.

Even before the show's first-season finale, in which he would settle for first run-

ner-up behind Kelly Clarkson, Guarini declared his intentions of becoming "a global mega-superstar—singer-actor-dancer" to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

Then things got tricky. In 2003, Guarini's debut album, "Justin Guarini," sold only about 100,000 copies. His big-screen debut, "From Justin to Kelly," costarring Clarkson, grossed less than \$5 million. He closed out the year by getting sued over a traffic accident, being dropped from his record label, and skipping an "American Idol" Christmas special for Fox.

Last March, he told *Entertainment Weekly* he'd hooked up with a new manager, former Jennifer Lopez guru Benny Medina, and set his sights on a new album. (He complained he hated the material he said he was ordered to record for the first CD.)

"I'm here to entertain. To (See Justin, Page 9)

Book highlights history of Black female artists

Creating Their Own Image:

The History of African-American Women Artists

By Lisa E. Farrington;
Oxford University Press;
384pp.; illus.;

Hardcover; \$55.
ISBN: 0-19-516721-X

By Kam Williams
Sentinel-Voice

"Chronicled in this text is the legacy of struggle and triumph of African-American women artists who have fallen prey to both racial and gender misrepresentations and who have, since the African slave trade began, strained against a dominant and insular culture. [The book] begins with an examination of the synthetic notions about women of African descent that have evolved over the past four centuries and branded them as over-sexed, overbearing and simple-minded..."

The discourse moves from a historic review of racial distortions to a localized discussion of the stereotypes that have specifically been applied to Black women: the carnal Jezebel, the asexual Mammy, and the imperious Matriarch. The rationale for this [thinking] can be found in the art works by African-American women which, in form and content, seek to deconstruct the persistent

falsehoods that have dogged Black female iconography." — Excerpted from the Introduction

Since first being brought to America in chains, African-American women have had to contend with both racism and sexism. And, despite the considerable opposition they encountered over the ages, there have been many very talented Black females in each generation who made great sacrifices to express themselves artistically.

They persevered, despite living in an unappreciative society unconcerned with affording them any opportunities to be creative.

Yet, even slaves and sharecroppers, though mired in poverty and doing mostly menial labor as field hands or domestic servants, found a variety of imaginative outlets, evidenced by a rich legacy of colorful quilts, elaborate gardens and more.

From the antebellum era to the present, Black women have continued to avail themselves of every medium available, from oils to watercolor to sculpture to pottery to textiles and beyond, in their attempt to tell their individual stories.

Though many died penniless and most were unknown in their day, their contribu-

tions nonetheless remain significant, if only as irrefutable proof of an alternative perspective of the prevailing ones of Black women as typically presented by this society.

Lisa Farrington, Professor of Art at the Parsons School of Design, noted that no encyclopedic opus dedicated to the art of Black women in the United States had ever been published. Now, she has helped rectify that glaring omission with *Creating Their Own Image: The History of African-American Women Artists*.

Focusing on the last 150 years or so, this informative tome not only profiles plenty of these previously unher-

alded artists and their work, but discusses just how they influenced such movements as The Harlem Renaissance, Abstractionism, Conceptualism, and Post-Modernism. Stocking her text with about 250 photos and illustrations, the author is to be applauded for succeeding in such a scholarly enterprise designed to elevate to its rightful place, even if belatedly, a significant slice of American culture.

Note: Starting on November 10th, The Parsons School of Design in New York City will exhibit 50 works by artists featured in this book in its Aronson Gallery.

Call Rudy Faust @ (212) 726-6007 for more info.

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