

Blige's 'Breakthrough' CD big hit

NEW YORK - Despite slow sales throughout the holiday season, the week leading up to Christmas saw a retail burst led by new releases from Mary J. Blige and Jamie Foxx.

Blige's "The Breakthrough" was the No. 1 album across the United States, selling a career-best 727,000 copies in the week ended December 25, according to Nielsen SoundScan data issued Wednesday.

Featuring guest appearances by Jay-Z, Raphael Saadiq and featuring Bono, the Geffen Records release marks her third trip to the top. She topped the Billboard 200 in September 2003 with her previous album "Love & Life," which started off with 286,000 copies, her second-best sales week after "No More Drama," which opened at No. 2 in 2001 with 294,000 copies. She first reached No. 1 in 1997 when "Share My World" sold 240,000 copies.



Mary J. Blige performs during MTV's "Total Request Live" at the MTV Times Square Studios last week in New York.

At 33 million units, overall CD sales were up by 2 percent compared to the same week a year ago, but year-to-date sales lagged those of 2004 by approxi-

mately 10 percent.

A musician long before scoring as an actor, Foxx's return to music with "Unpredictable" moved an impressive 598,000 copies to debut at No. 2. The "Ray" star began stirring the musical waters earlier this year as a featured performer on Kanye West's smash hit "Gold Digger." Foxx first cracked The Billboard 200 in 1994 with his debut album "Peep This" which peaked at No. 78.

The late Notorious B.I.G.'s star-filled "Duets: The Final Chapter" opened at No. 3 with 438,000 copies. The Bad Boy release, featuring such guests as Eminem, Jay-Z, R. Kelly and Blige — comes nearly nine years after the rap icon's death in an unsolved drive-by shooting.

Last week's champion, Eminem's "Curtain Call: The Hits," fell to No. 4 with 430,000 copies. "American Idol" star Carrie Underwood's "Some Hearts" was also down three, to No. 5, with 401,000. In its 37th week on the chart, Mariah Carey's "The Emancipation of Mimi" rose one to No. 6 with 290,000 units.

Carey overtakes 50 Cent in sales

LOS ANGELES - Capping one of pop music's biggest comebacks, Mariah Carey has overtaken rap star 50 Cent in a year-end battle to claim the hottest-selling album of 2005.

Carey's Grammy-nominated "The Emancipation of Mimi" climbed to the No. 1 spot for the year on U.S. sales of 290,000 copies during the week ending December 25, raising her 37-week total to 4.87 million units, retail tracker Nielsen SoundScan reported on Wednesday.

Assuming "Mimi" stays the course through the post-Christmas sales rush, Carey would become the first female solo artist to boast the year's top album since Alanis Morissette in 1996 with "Jagged Little Pill."

50 Cent slipped to No. 2 for 2005 as his sophomore set "The Massacre" posted sales of 30,000 copies last week, taking his 43-week tally to 4.83 million units, Nielsen SoundScan said.

The rapper stands little chance of regaining the lead from Carey so long as the final week of the year — traditionally the busiest in music sales — brings another six-figure tally for "Mimi," as expected.

On the latest sales chart, "Mimi" stood at No. 6 for the week, while "Massacre" languished at No. 125. Both albums had opened at No. 1.

The success of "Mimi" marks a dramatic turnaround for Carey, 35, whose career hit the skids four years ago.

Music giant EMI Group PLC paid Carey nearly \$30 million to buy out her \$80 million contract in January 2002 after the commercial flop of "Glitter," the soundtrack to her film debut and her first release from EMI's Virgin Records. Overall album sales for the week ended Christmas Day were up 2 percent from the same period a year ago, following three straight weeks of double-digit declines, according to SoundScan.

Smith ID thief back in prison

PITTSBURGH (AP)—A man who stole actor Will Smith's identity to run up credit-card debts is going back to prison for two years for violating probation, a judge ruled Tuesday. Senior U.S. District Judge Alan N. Bloch concluded that Carlos Lomax, 45, formerly of Duquesne, was "not amenable" to probation, according to defense attorney Mark Lancaster.

Lomax failed to rehabilitate himself and make restitution to his victims while on supervised release, U.S. Attorney Mary Beth Buchanan said.

Lomax was sentenced to 37 months in prison — later reduced to 30 months — after pleading guilty to opening 14 bogus credit accounts at Pittsburgh-area stores using the identity of Willard C. Smith, the legal name of the rapper-turned-actor. Lomax was released from a halfway house in June.

Lomax charged nearly \$33,000 on accounts he opened in Will Smith's name.

Bloch ordered Lomax to pay about \$64,000, a sum that includes purchases Lomax made using Smith's name and that of a retired, unidentified pro football player.

Munich

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erosion of moral bearings, and intermittent questioning of the whether an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is the right response to terrorism.

Though spiritually transformed in unanticipated

ways, missing loved ones, and plagued, alternatively, by both disgust and self-doubt, they persevere, in spite of the discouraging realization that they have somehow been discovered by the enemy, and are now, too, being hunted one-by-one.

A most-profound morality play which essentially expounds upon an elemental Biblical passage.

Excellent (4 stars). Rated R for explicit eroticism, expletives, nudity, graphic violence, sexual innuendo and sex-linked gore.

Expertise Student of the Month

Dedria Brownlee's career plans suddenly changed from many years in the medical field to cosmetology and she couldn't be happier about her January graduation. After a car accident and injuries that left her out of work, she got an opportunity to attend Expertise, realizing a childhood dream she had "put on the back burner." After graduation she starts work full time at a neighborhood beauty salon and believes "customer satisfaction" is the biggest reward. She gets bubbly speaking about her three children, "They are proud of me." She would like to return to Expertise someday as an instructor. "After all I have gotten, I want to give." Her advice to aspiring students is, "Put more in and you will appreciate it more." She enjoys helping people make their dreams come true.

NOTE: The student of the month for November was Maalika Mickel, an aspiring cosmetologist who recently graduated from Expertise School of Beauty.



DEDRIA BROWNLEE

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6 Teams	47/1	47/1
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8 Teams	180/1	180/1

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