

O'Jays son dies after illness in Ohio lock-up

Special to Sentinel-Voice
CLEVELAND — Sean Levert, a third of the 1980s R&B trio LeVert and son of lead O'Jays singer Eddie Levert, has died after falling ill while serving a jail term. He was 39.

Authorities said that an autopsy was inconclusive but foul play was ruled out.

Levert was sentenced last week to one year and 10 months in jail for failing to pay \$89,025 in child support for three children. He died at Lutheran Hospital in Cleveland, less than an hour after he was taken there from the jail, said coroner Frank Miller.

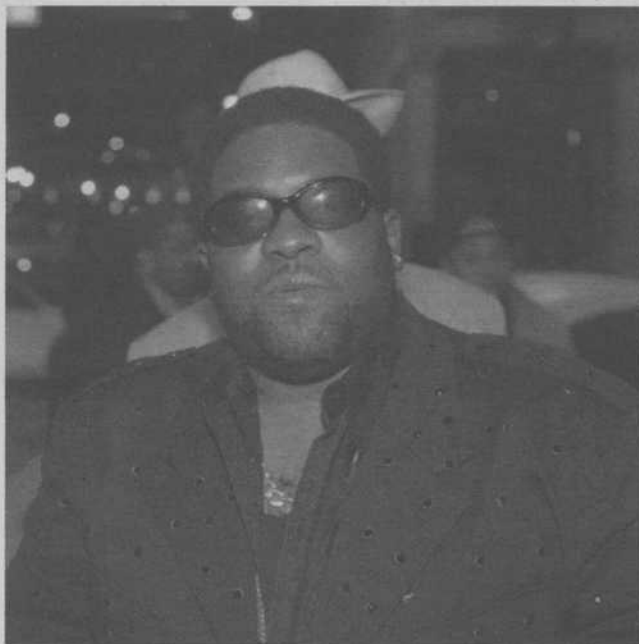
Levert was sentenced by Cuyahoga County Common

Pleas Judge Nancy Margaret Russo, who said a presentence report indicated he had been addicted to marijuana from the time he was 14 until recently.

He didn't speak at his sentencing and gave no indication of any health problems, the judge said Monday.

His brother Gerald Levert, who had success as a solo artist after leaving their trio died in 2006 at age 40 of an accidental mix of prescription and over-the-counter drugs.

The brothers had formed LeVert in the 1980s with childhood friend Marc Gordon. Their hits included "Baby I'm Ready," "(Pop, Pop, Pop, Pop) Goes My Mind" and "Casanova."



Sentinel-Voice photo by Marty Frierson
Sean Levert at his brother Gerald Levert's wake in Cleveland in 2006 succumbs while in police custody.

"Casanova" was nominated for a Grammy in 1988 for best R&B performance by a duo or group with vocal. It was also nominated for best R&B song.

At Gerald Levert's funeral service in November 2006, Sean Levert and his father performed "Dance With My Father" and personalized the words for Gerald.

The elder Levert's group, the O'Jays, was known for such smash hits as "Back Stabbers" and "Love Train." Sean Levert found a new third partner last year and was trying to revive LeVert.

An autopsy was done Monday but no immediate cause of death was determined, according to Powell

Caesar, a spokesman for the Cuyahoga County's coroner's office, but he said there was no evidence of foul play or trauma.

Levert suffered from high blood pressure and had been hallucinating in jail, Caesar said.

Toxicology reports could take four to six weeks, he said.

Warden Kevin McDonough said earlier that Levert had been sick and guards were watching him at the jail's regular cellblock because he had been acting strangely.

Sean Levert had pleaded guilty last week to six counts of nonsupport involving children ages 11, 15 and 17.

T.I. admits to gun possession, faces prison time

Special to Sentinel-Voice
LOS ANGELES— The self-proclaimed King of the South is at the mercy of the court.

Hit-making rapper T.I. pleaded guilty recently to federal weapons charges in return for a light prison sentence.

Exactly what the sentence will be remains to be seen.

U.S. District Judge Charles Pannell Jr. will withhold levying a prison term for a full year.

In the interim, T.I., whose real name is Clifford Harris, must complete between 1,000 and 1,500 hours of community service, which includes talking to kids about

the dangers of guns, gangbanging and drugs, and pay a \$100,000 fine.

T.I. said he understood the terms of his deal, before he formally pleaded guilty to possession of unregistered machine guns and silencers, unlawful possession of machine guns and possession of firearms by a convicted felon, according to a spokesman for the U.S. Attorney's Office in Atlanta, where the sentencing took place.

"I'd like to thank God for blessing me with a second chance in life and success," he told reporters outside the courthouse.

"I'm looking forward to turning this negative time in

my life into a positive," he said. "I know I have a long road of redemption to travel."

Because the rapper has a prior record dating back to 1998, when he was caught selling crack at the age of 17, he is required to serve time under federal law.

The 27-year-old will likely put in less than 12 months in a federal lockup if he adheres to the other terms of his sentence.

Given that he originally faced a maximum of 10 years in the clink and a \$250,000 fine for each count, that's not a bad alternative, especially when prosecutors seemed to be playing with a stacked deck. If the case had gone to



T.I. faces federal prison time for illegal gun possession.

trial, the feds were given clearance to introduce as evidence the rapper's three previous arrests involving guns.

T.I. was collared by agents from the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives Oct. 13, when he attempted to purchase three machine guns and silencers in a shopping

center parking lot using his bodyguard as an intermediary.

The arrest took place just hours before and blocks away from his headliner performance at the BET Hip-Hop Awards in his hometown of Atlanta.

He initially pleaded not guilty, he was subsequently

released on a \$3 million bond on strict conditions, which included home confinement as well as 24-hour electronic monitoring.

U.S. Attorney David Nahmias said those conditions will remain in effect until sentencing.

T.I. did get an opportunity to step out for a weekend when he won court approval to attend Easter services with his girlfriend and their children.

The weapons bust clouded what had been a remarkable year for the hip-hop star.

His sixth studio album, T.I. vs. T.I.P., entered the Billboard charts at No. 1 last July. And in the fall, T.I. tried his hand at acting, appearing opposite Denzel Washington and Russell Crowe in the appropriately titled action flick "American Gangster."

Nancy Wilson hospitalized

Special to Sentinel-Voice
JOSHUA TREE, Calif. — Nancy Wilson was hospitalized Monday for treatment of a collapsed lung, a spokeswoman said.

The 71-year-old Grammy-winning singer was expected to recover but will not be able to make a performance scheduled in Memphis, Tenn., next weekend, said Devra Levy, wife of Wilson's manager, John Levy.

Wilson's lung was being reinflated at Hi-Desert Medical Center in Joshua Tree and she was in good spirits, Devra Levy said.

Wilson, who lives in the Southern California high desert, began experiencing pain and was taken to the hospital by her husband, Wiley Burton.

Devra Levy said she did not know the cause of the collapsed lung. She said Wilson has had some respiratory problems over the years.

Wilson has been singing professionally for more than 50 years and is semiretired.

Last year, her album "Turned to Blue" won the Grammy for best jazz vocal album. She also won that category at the 2005 Grammys for the album "R.S.V.P. (Rare



NANCY WILSON

Songs, Very Personal)." In 1965 she was presented the Grammy for best rhythm & blues recording for "How Glad I Am."

Carey surpasses Elvis in No. 1s

Special to Sentinel-Voice
LOS ANGELES — With her 18th chart-topper "Touch My Body," Mariah Carey has passed Elvis Presley for the most No. 1 singles on the Billboard singles chart, and is now second only to the Beatles. But while the diva was in full celebration mode after learning of her latest milestone, she was also quick to put her accomplishment in perspective.

"I really can never put myself in the category of people who have not only revolutionized music but also changed the world," Carey told The Associated Press on Tuesday via phone from London. "That's a completely different era and time ... I'm just feeling really happy and grateful."

Carey's single is the new No. 1 single on Billboard's Hot 100 singles chart: The song also is No. 1 on the trade magazine's

digital download chart thanks to a precedent-setting 286,000 downloads in its debut week.

She had been tied with Presley with 17 No. 1 singles; the Beatles are the all-time leaders with 20. (Madonna also beat a Presley record this week, surpassing the King for the most top 10 hits with her 37th for her hit "4 Minutes.")

Carey said being in such company was gratifying not only because of her personal success, but what it meant for women and minorities. "For me, in my mind the accomplishment is just that much sweeter," she said. "In terms of my ethnicity, always feeling like an outsider, always feeling different ... for me it's about saying, 'Thank you Lord, for giving me the faith to believe in myself when other people had written me off.'"