

Bits 'n' Pieces

TAYLOR MEDIA SERVICES

Sean Combs angers many with "only light-skinned" Black women remark



Sean "Diddy" Combs

Hip Hop mogul Sean "Diddy" Combs has been spending a lot of time and money in recent months trying to sharpen his image as a debonair Black playboy who should take the leading role in the next James Bond movie. But he hurt himself among many fans last week when issuing a casting call for his next CIROC vodka commercial. In issuing the call for women to participate in the commercial, Combs specifically said that only "White, Hispanic and Light-skinned African-American women" need apply. Combs and CIROC both later tried to back away from his comments but the damage had already been done. Criticism came from a host of people including Pearl Jr., author of "Black Women Need Love, Too" who referred to Combs' comments as "Another attack on Black women by one of our own." Whether the criticism had an effect will not be known until the next CIROC vodka commercial airs on television.

British charity urges Madonna to stop adopting African children

Shortly after the news became public that superstar singer Madonna was planning to adopt another child from a poor African country, the British charity Save the Children UK announced its opposition. According to the charity, Madonna's apparent fascination with adopting poor Black children "risks sending the wrong message." Then late last week, the Malawi government rejected Madonna's latest adoption request.



Madonna

Queen Latifah blasts Hollywood for "lack of strong roles" for Black women



Queen Latifah

Rapper-turned-actress Queen Latifah last week blasted the entertainment industry for failing to generate "strong, quality roles for African-American actresses." Her comments came during an interview with the Black-oriented British website ThisIsBristol. Latifah charged, "There aren't enough roles and this invisibility is really starting to annoy me." The actress said she was working hard to change the situation. She added she would use her clout as an actress and as a producer to make sure each movie set she works on "is multicultural." Latifah has most recently starred as Mamma Morton in "Chicago" and August in "The Secret Lives of Bees."

Natalie Cole remains in desperate need of a kidney transplant

Singer Natalie Cole remains in desperate need of a kidney transplant donor after it was recently determined that a kidney from her 31-year-old son would not be suitable. The 59-year-old Cole and daughter of entertainment legend Nat King Cole has been in search of a kidney since shortly after being diagnosed with Hepatitis C in 2008. She suffered kidney problems after undergoing treatment for liver disease. She must currently undergo dialysis three times a week in order to stay alive. Cole revealed her desperate status last week during an interview on CNN's Larry King Show.



Natalie Cole

Brown pleads not guilty in fight

Special to Sentinel-Voice

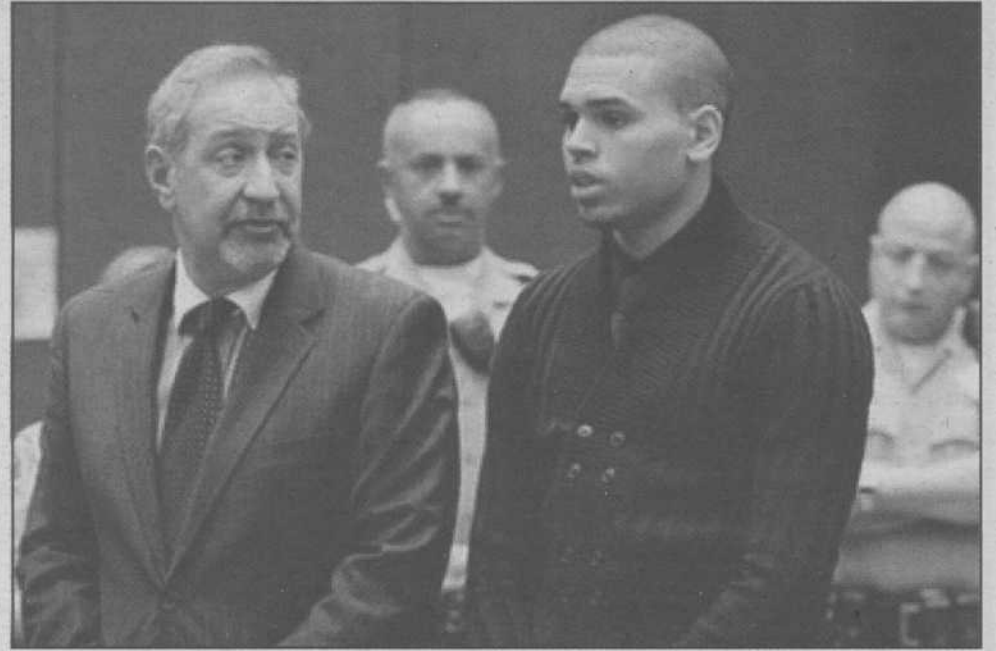
LOS ANGELES —Chris Brown pleaded not guilty Monday to threatening and assaulting his girlfriend, fellow music star Rihanna.

The 19-year-old R&B singer entered his plea, speaking in a soft voice, while standing alongside his lawyer, Mark Geragos. His mother sat in the first row, red-eyed.

Within moments of the hearing, a lawyer for Rihanna said the singer was hoping a plea deal could be reached before the case goes to trial. "She would be pleased if this was over quickly," attorney Donald Etra said. He reiterated that Rihanna would testify if required.

Brown was charged in March by Los Angeles County prosecutors with felony assault likely to cause great bodily injury and making criminal threats. He was arrested nearly a month earlier after police said he was involved in an early morning altercation with a woman who identified the "Run It!" singer as her attacker.

The alleged beating of Rihanna has inspired an online public service announcement about dating violence. A new video by the teen organization DoSomething.org features actors re-creating the pop star's grim, highly publicized confrontation with her boyfriend, singer Chris Brown. A young man and woman re-enact details from a Los Angeles police affidavit alleging that on Feb. 8, Brown punched, bit and choked Rihanna until she nearly lost consciousness.



Chris Brown, right, and his attorney Mark Geragos, left, appear during his arraignment on charges of felony assault likely to cause great bodily injury and making criminal threats involving girlfriend Rihanna, at the Los Angeles County Criminal Courts in downtown Los Angeles on Monday. Brown has pleaded not guilty to the charges against him.

Court records list Brown's victim as "Robyn F." Rihanna's real name is Robyn Rihanna Fenty.

Etra represented the 21-year-old "Umbrella" singer at Monday's arraignment, but did not speak during the five-minute hearing. He said afterward that that the singer is

in "fine spirits" and spending time with her family in Barbados.

Etra said Brown's plea was "totally expected."

If convicted, Brown could be sentenced to probation or nearly five years in prison.

Neither side has publicly addressed Brown and Rihanna's relationship since the incident.

But there has been discernible fallout and backlash since Brown's arrest.

Neither singer performed at the Grammy Awards hours after the alleged beating, and both were also no-shows for the Kids' Choice Awards

show March 28.

Sponsors have stopped using Brown, some radio stations have stopped playing his music and some broadcasters have even started playing an anti-Chris Brown song created by the little-known dance group Jump Smokers.

Brown left the courthouse with his mother, two bodyguards and an entourage. On his way out, he had to walk through a phalanx of cameras. He was picked up by a car in front of the courthouse.

Geragos offered no comment and quickly left the courthouse with his client.

Anti-Brown music hurts two groups

Special to Sentinel-Voice
NEW YORK — The unexpected success of a song criti-

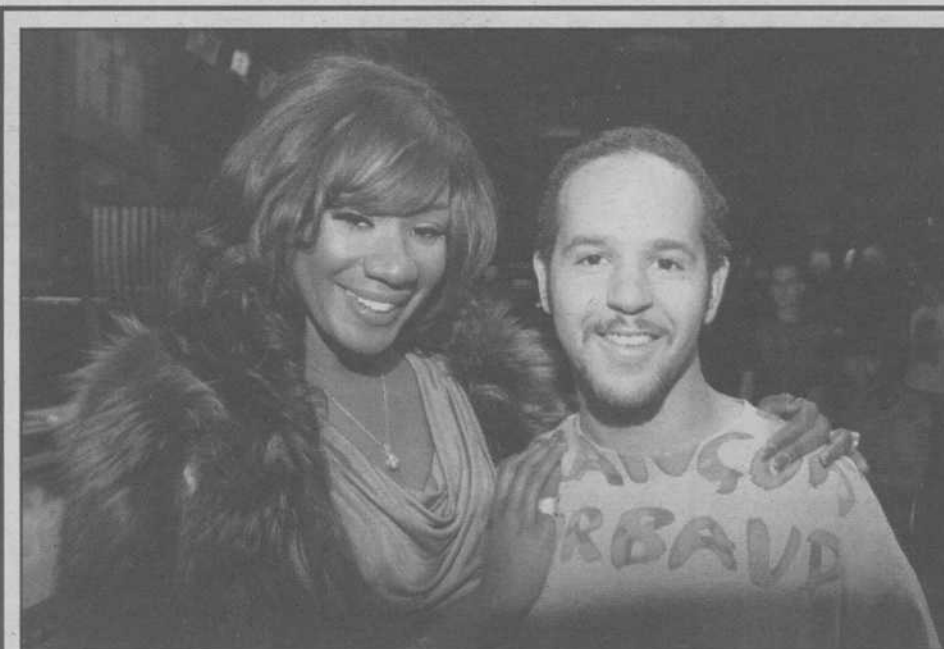
cizing Chris Brown has caused havoc for two previously unknown bands.

A group of DJs from Chicago found unexpected airplay last week when radio stations began playing "My Flow Is So Tight." The main lyric suggests that Brown, who's been charged with felony assault and making criminal threats against R&B singer Rihanna, should be beaten for his alleged crime.

Brown pleaded not guilty Monday.

The DJs behind the anti-Brown song called themselves Smoke Jumpers, but that name had already been taken by an Austin, Texas, hip-hop group. The group says they quickly changed their name to Jump Smokers.

The original Smoke Jumpers aren't amused. The group's Ashley Harkrider says their name has been hurt "in the minds of music listeners everywhere."



CANDY FOR YOUR EARS

Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Danielle, owner of Bella talent agency in Los Angeles and star of reality show "Candy Girls," wishes hip-hop recording artist Isaac Sawyer good luck on his upcoming album release party on April 18 at Boomers. Sawyer invited the diva and some of her video vixens to join him for the release party for his new compact disc, "The Q & A."