

FOCUS

P. Diddy Pleads for Drug Law Changes

Supporters say Rockefeller-era legislature is too harsh

You can't really even fathom the amount of damage this is doing to somebody's family - somebody's mother, somebody's father, somebody's child.

—Sean "P. Diddy" Combs, speaking out against New York drug laws he feels are outdated



Sean "P. Diddy" Combs addresses the media during a news conference held to call for the repeal of the state's Rockefeller-Era drug laws, last week in New York. The laws, passed in 1973 and 1974 during then-Gov. Nelson Rockefeller's administration, can subject first-time offenders to 15 years to life in prison if convicted of selling as little as 2 ounces, or possessing as little as 4 ounces, of a controlled substance. (AP Photo)

(AP)—Sean "P. Diddy" Combs joined fellow rap impresario Russell Simmons and former U.S. housing secretary Andrew Cuomo in calling for the repeal of New York's strict Rockefeller drug laws.

"If you're not affected by this law you can't really even fathom the amount of damage this is doing to somebody's family - somebody's mother, somebody's father,

somebody's child," Combs said Wednesday. "Lives are changed by this law, that if it's not happening to you or to one of your family members you may not really feel the effect of it."

The Rockefeller laws, passed in the 1970s, can subject first-time offenders to 15 years to life in prison if convicted of selling as little as 2 ounces or possessing

as little as 4 ounces of a controlled substance.

There is a broad consensus that the laws are too harsh, but Gov. George Pataki and the state Legislature have been unable to agree on how to reform or repeal them.

Joining Simmons, Combs and Cuomo at a news conference at a midtown hotel were the Mothers of the New York Disappeared, representing family members of people incarcerated under the Rockefeller laws.



BIG EASY

Buck Braden's "Zu Zu Mamou" depicts the human side of the Big Easy. The ladies or "flowers" are incorporated with the New Orleans architecture, sights and sounds. The painting goes on display from June 26 to July 27 at the Talisman Gallery, an artist owned cooperative at 1476 N.E. Alberta.

Rap Stars and R&B Legends Join 'Hollywood Homicide'

Harrison Ford and Josh Hartnett join rap sensations Master P and Kurupt, as well as R&B veterans Gladys Knight and Smokey Robinson, in the fast-paced action-comedy Hollywood Homicide.

The film which opens in local theaters Friday provides a rare inside look at the professional and personal lives of Los Angeles Police Department detectives Joe Gavilan (Ford) and K.C. Calden (Hartnett), who turn LAPD upside-down with laughter.

Gavilan is a weary but tenacious police veteran at the top of his game professionally, though his personal life is rapidly unraveling. K.C. moonlights as a yoga teacher and aspiring actor and is constantly getting in the way of their investigation into a high-profile gangland-style murder.

Master P plays club owner Julius Armas, a man who takes pride in being a successful businessman and entrepreneur, but suddenly finds himself thrust into the middle of an intense police investigation after four rappers are violently murdered in his nightclub.

Rap sensation Kurupt plays K-RO, a young rap-songwriter who witnessed the gangland-style murders, but he is fearful about pointing the finger. He is convinced the man behind the murders is Antoine Sartain (Isaiah Washington) a dangerous record company executive, whose version of tough love is death.



Master P stars in the film 'Hollywood Homicide' which also features R&B legends Gladys Knight and Smokey Robinson.

Kurupt's mother is played by R&B legend Gladys Knight.

During the film's final scenes, a wild pursuit ensues as Gavilan and Calden close in on the suspect. When Gavilan desperately needs a car, he commandeers a taxi and takes it kicking and screaming from the cab driver, played by R&B veteran Smokey Robinson.

The music in the film also offers mixed selections of today and yesterday with cutting edge hip-hop, as well as some classic oldies. The mix adds to a wild, but, ultimately, satisfying movie-going experience.



Lee tells Viacom to 'Do the Right Thing'

Filmmaker Spike Lee has sued media giant Viacom over its plans to rename the TNN cable channel Spike TV. In the suit filed Tuesday, Lee - born Shelton Jackson Lee - claims Spike TV refers to his name. Viacom denies the accusation.

Jackson 'Thrilled' Lawsuit Settled

(AP) — A \$12 million lawsuit against Michael Jackson by former financial advisers that could have revealed details of his finances has been settled.

"It just got to a point where we agreed on what we needed to do," Jackson attorney Zia Modabber said, adding that the singer "was thrilled."

Union Investment Corp. of South Korea and its financial adviser, Myung-Ho Lee, claimed Jackson owed them \$12 million in unpaid fees and expenses for their efforts to put his financial affairs in order.

The agreement came as the judge was to rule on a request by Jackson's lawyer to dismiss the suit on grounds that Lee was not properly licensed to give investment advice in California.

Court TV was asking to televise the trial, which could have meant a public airing of records of Jackson's closely guarded finances.

The suit claimed that Jackson, who amassed a half-billion-dollar



Michael Jackson holds up an honorary diploma given to him by Roosevelt High School administrators in Gary, Ind., last Wednesday. Jackson returned to the city of his hometown for the first time in decades and was also presented with a key to the city. (AP photo)

fortune as the "King of Pop" over the past 20 years, is saddled with debt and teetering near bankruptcy.

Jackson, meanwhile, was in Gary, Ind., for ceremonies honoring him in his hometown, which he had not visited for decades. Thousands of fans lined the streets to watch his

dozen-vehicle motorcade go by. Jackson, 44, was 9 when his family left the city.

Stops included City Hall, where the mayor gave Jackson a key to the city, the neighborhood where he grew up and a high school where Jackson was awarded an honorary diploma.

Luther Vandross Leaves Intensive Care

(AP) — Luther Vandross has been moved out of intensive care and upgraded to stable condition, his business manager said Thursday.

Vandross "is more and more responsive each day," Carmen Romano said in a statement. "I feel as though I am watching a modern day miracle."

The 52-year-old R&B singer remains hospitalized at Cornell-Weill

Medical Center. He had been in critical condition since his April 16 stroke, at one point contracting pneumonia and needing a tracheotomy to help him breathe.

However, family and friends told The Associated Press last week that Vandross was beginning to mouth words and had started light therapy. He also no longer needs a respirator to breathe.

His move out of intensive care



Luther Vandross

comes two days after the release of his new album, "Dance With My Father."

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