

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

Focus is back on the Music for Chris Brown

Singer has new beginning two years after Rihanna

(AP)—Two years ago, the Grammy Awards appeared to mark the end of Chris Brown's career. This year, it is serving as a new beginning.

Life for the multiplatinum sensation dramatically changed on the eve of music's biggest night in 2009, when he assaulted then-girlfriend Rihanna and both were forced to bow out of the ceremony. In the months that followed, he saw his reputation tarnished, he had to plead guilty to a felony, and his comeback CD, "Graffiti," was a commercial disappointment.

But with the success of his brush-off anthem "Deuces," three nominations at the Sunday, Feb. 13 Grammys (including best contemporary R&B album), an upcoming CD and an Australian tour in April, the focus on Chris Brown has returned to his music, without adding the Rihanna-prefix.

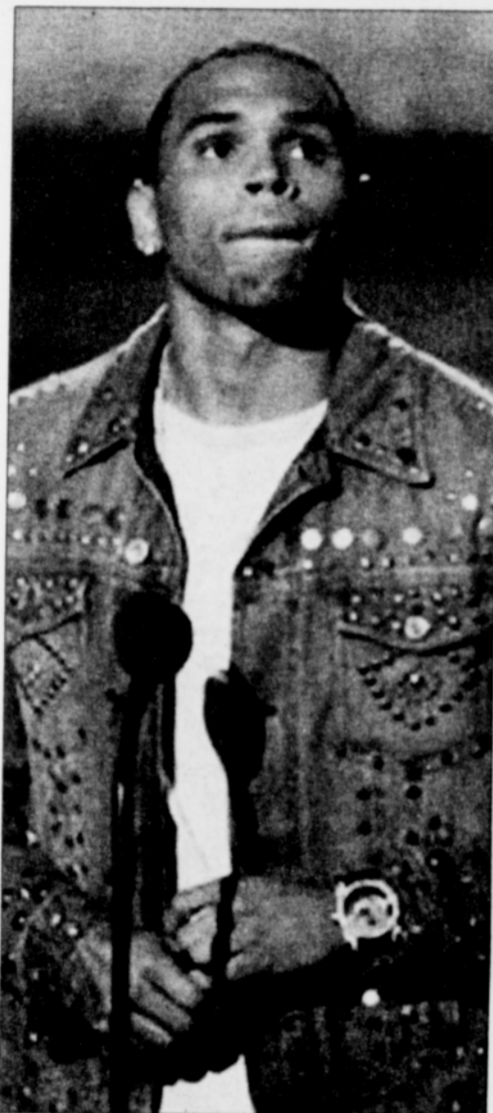
"We feel good now that everybody's talking about his music, which is exactly what Chris' intention is," said Tom Carrabba, the executive vice president and general manager of Jive Label Group, Brown's home label since he released his first album at age 16.

Carrabba says Brown has a newfound confidence, which he believes is the reason for the singer's current success.

"I think when he was a little bit younger he was still trying to find his way a little bit and fine-tune his craft, but I think over the last two years he's absolutely developed a confidence and is very secure in his decision-making process," Carrabba said.

Brown, now 21, is serving five years of probation after pleading guilty to felony assault for the attack on Rihanna in the early morning hours before the 2009 Grammys. The Virginia native was commended in November for completing more than one-third of the required 180 days of community service and for almost finishing his domestic violence counseling.

Over the past year, Brown has



Singer Chris Brown at the BET Awards in Los Angeles last June. (AP Photo)

released a flurry of music. After "Graffiti," released in December 2009, failed to create a buzz for the singer like his past albums, Brown put out various mixtapes. One of those, "Fan of a Fan," a collaboration with rapper Tyga, featured "Deuces," a mid-tempo tune that hit No. 1 on Billboard's R&B/Hip-Hop songs chart for nine weeks; the platinum-selling single peaked at No. 14 on the Hot 100 chart. The music video for the song was No. 1 on BET's Top 100 videos of 2010.

Brown, who has acted in movies such as the popular "Stomp the Yard," also hit No. 1 at the box office last year as part of the ensemble cast in the heist film "Takers," which also starred rapper T.I. and Idris Elba.

"Deuces" is up for best rap/sung collaboration at the upcoming Grammys, where it will compete with Jay-Z's "Empire State of Mind," Eminem's "Love the Way You Lie" and B.o.B's "Nothin' on You," songs that are all up for the coveted record of the year award and had been No. 1 pop hits in 2010.

Carrabba says the Grammy nominations are "another step in the right direction for Chris Brown." "Graffiti," Brown's third album which

has only sold 336,000 units, according to Nielsen SoundScan, is one Carrabba says will be more appreciated in the future.

"We always thought one day when Chris is where he belongs, people will go back to that record and say, 'You know what, this is a record that was overlooked,'" Carrabba said. "We'll see in time, but right now that's behind us and we're kind of looking forward."

Other tracks have also helped keep the focus on Brown's music. The Euro-dance tune, "Yeah 3x," is a Top 15 pop hit, while the bedroom groove "No Bull" is also a hit on the R&B charts. A new album, "F.A.M.E. (Forgiving All My Enemies)," is due out this spring.

Jive hopes his new CD will put Brown back on the path to phenomenal success that he blazed when he made his debut as a teen. His 2005 self-titled debut was a double-platinum success and featured three Top 10 pop hits, including the No. 1 smash "Run It!" He racked in even bigger hits with the release of his sophomore album, 2007's double-platinum "Exclusive," including the No. 1 song "Kiss Kiss" and the hits "With You" and "Forever." He was named Billboard's top artist for 2008 among other accolades.

"Some people might have forgot, but then once you see him perform, you understand the gift that he has," Carrabba said.

One performance that brought his talents to the forefront was Brown's emotional Michael Jackson tribute at last year's BET Awards. Mirroring Jackson's signature dance moves while performing "Billie Jean," he then started to sing "Man in the Mirror." But he broke down in tears, fell to the stage, and couldn't finish. The audience, some people in tears themselves, cheered him on.

Stephen Hill, BET's president of programming, music and specials and the awards' executive producer, says Brown's performance at the ceremony was "the turning point" of his rising return.

"Here's a young man that made a very, very bad mistake and he was in danger in being marked by that event," he said. "I think that moment and that tribute, we probably gave him another chance."



Sat., Feb. 19
2:00pm & 7:00pm

Purchase tickets at the Rose Quarter Box Office or online at ComcastTIX.com

