

CELEBRITY PLAYGROUND

BY MICHAEL SHULMAN

THE LADY IS A WINNER

Mary J. Blige, the Queen of Hip-Hop Soul, Brings Her Sexy Brand of R&B to the Hard Rock

She's just Mary, just Mary, just Mary—and that's just the way we want her. On July 14th, divalicious soul chanteuse Mary J. Blige brings her sexy brand of rhythm and blues to The Joint at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, and the show is gonna be a doozy—filled to the brim with her singular style and dazzling on-stage energy.

Arguably the most cherished of the jewels in Sean "Diddy" Combs' crown of treasured finds, Blige first burst onto the scene in 1992 with her huge crossover hit *What's the 411?*, which went on to earn her the Soul Train awards for Best New Artist and Best R&B/Soul Single for the track "Real Love." More than a decade later, in 2003, she was still bringing in the trophies with a Grammy (her second) for Best Female R&B Vocal Performance for the single "He Thinks I Don't Know," from her fiercely fabulous album *No More Drama*.

This past year, after taking home statuettes from the American Music Awards and the Billboard Music Awards, Blige found herself as the most-nominated artist at the Grammy Awards, with eight noms (she took home three). The lady is a winner through and through.

Often credited with being the poster girl for the look known as ghetto fabulous, Blige is a style maven and has always dressed to the beat of her own beat box, as it were. Remember the huge gold earrings? The fox tail? The fur-and-leather combo? Those were all Miss Blige.

Mary has also been bitten by the acting bug and was seen on prime time this February as a high-school cheerleading coach on an episode of *Ghost Whisperer* on CBS. Additionally, Blige has been tapped to play the lead in *I Put a Spell on You*, MTV Films' highly anticipated bio pic of jazz legend Nina Simone.

Mary J. Blige, the Queen of Hip-Hop Soul, will be performing at The Joint at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino on Saturday, July 14th, at 9 p.m.

Mary J. Blige (here at the 2007 NAACP Image Awards at L.A.'s Shrine Auditorium) has been tapped to star in MTV's highly anticipated bio pic of legendary jazz/soul singer Nina Simone. Blige will be performing at the Joint at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Saturday, July 14th.



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