

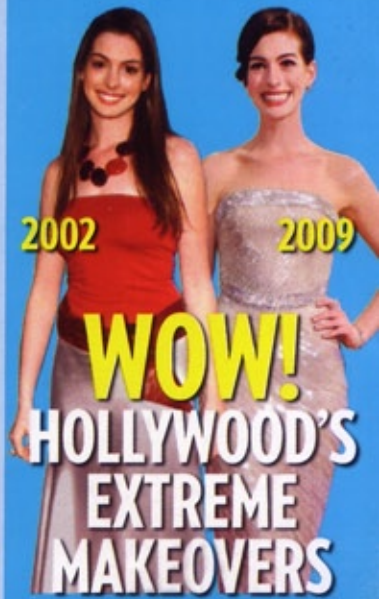
MARCH 23, 2009

People

TEXAS POLYGAMY SECT

THE CHILDREN OF THE CULT

EXCLUSIVE ONE YEAR LATER INSIDE THE COMPOUND



2002

2009

WOW!
HOLLYWOOD'S
EXTREME
MAKEOVERS



THE BACHELOR'S
MELISSA
New Boyfriend,
New Show!



REALITY STAR
JADE GOODY
Dying on TV



PEOPLE.COM

FACING THE MUSIC

"He's not a monster like everybody is trying to portray him," a source close to Brown's family says of the R&B star (in court March 5).



**CHRIS BROWN
& RIHANNA**

THE LEGAL BATTLE BEGINS

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2
3

Chris Brown is charged with two felonies—and must now face prosecutors and the court of public opinion as graphic details of his alleged attack surface

The timing couldn't have been worse. On March 5 Chris Brown's official MySpace blog screamed, "Vote for Chris Brown for Kids Choice Awards!"—a reference to the upcoming Nickelodeon event.

That same day, the singer was appearing in a Los Angeles courtroom attending to some not-so-kid-friendly business: Brown was formally charged with two felony counts—assault and making criminal threats—stemming from an allegedly violent fight with Rihanna Feb. 8. Graphic details—including his biting and choking Rihanna, according to police—emerged from a search warrant affidavit released by the court (see box). Despite the threat of prison time if he's convicted (a maximum of just under five years), a source close to Brown's family says, "Chris is fine. He just wants to get through this."

He's not alone. Though Rihanna (who has been in L.A.) was not in court, her attorney Donald Etra appeared on her behalf and tells PEOPLE, "She wants this case to be concluded as fairly and expeditiously as possible. She wants to get on with her life and career." But with many possible legal outcomes, it may be some time before Rihanna, 21, and Brown, 19, can move on. Instead of entering a plea, Brown's attorney Mark Geragos asked for and received a postponement until April 6. While Geragos is known as a bulldog defense attorney, some legal experts say he'd go for a misdemeanor-only plea bargain. (Convicted felons are not allowed into some foreign countries, which could seriously curtail Brown's future touring prospects.)

Geragos will spend the coming days assessing the prosecution's case, which may rely heavily on Rihanna's testimony. "If she refuses to testify,

STATE OF CALIFORNIA - COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES SEARCH WARRANT AND AFFIDAVIT

Page 4 of 8

Your affiant, Detective De Shon Andrews, Serial No. 33208, has been a Police Officer for Angeles Police Department for the past twelve years. In January of 2003, your affiant

Brown was unable to force Robyn F. out of the vehicle because she was wearing a seat belt. When he could not force her to exit, he took his right hand and shoved her head against the passenger window of the vehicle causing an approximate one inch raised circular contusion. Robyn F. turned to face Brown and he punched her in the left eye with his right hand. He then drove away in the vehicle and continued to punch her in the face with his right hand while steering the vehicle with his left hand. The assault caused Robyn F.'s mouth to fill with blood and blood to splatter all over her clothing and the interior of the vehicle.

THE BRUTAL ALLEGATIONS

According to a search warrant affidavit, a detective said the couple's Feb. 8 incident was sparked by a "three-page text message" from a former Brown fling. (A source close to the defense says she is "someone older than him who is working for him.") The pair argued, then Brown attempted to push Rihanna out of his car. "I'm going to beat the s--- out of you when we get home," he allegedly told her. At one point, Brown "placed her in a headlock" to the point where Rihanna was "unable to breathe." She tried to "gouge his eyes" before Brown bit her fingers then let her go. A local resident heard her screams and called 911.

THE LEGAL PLAYERS

MARK GERAGOS

Brown's famed defense attorney "is good at cross-examination," says law professor pal Stan Goldman.



DONALD ETRA

Hired to advise Rihanna of her rights, her lawyer is "a by-the-book guy," says attorney Steve Sitkoff.



COMMR. KRISTI LOUSTEAU

Known as a no-nonsense judge with a good heart, she'll preside over the case for now.





"She's recovering well," Etra says of his client Rihanna (with Brown in January in N.Y.C.).

[prosecutors] probably won't be able to get in whatever statements she made to police," says Stan Goldman, a Loyola Law School professor who attended the March 5 proceedings at Geragos's request. Etra tells PEOPLE Rihanna "will appear and testify" if she is subpoenaed by either side. But "common sense dictates that if they're truly in love and fully back together, Rihanna is not going to come into court and testify that he beat her up," explains L.A. criminal defense attorney Steve Sitkoff.

In the meantime, the court of public opinion has already come down hard on Brown. "If I hear a Chris Brown

song, I immediately change the radio," says Laredo, Texas, college student Catherine Archer, 20, a former victim of dating violence. Adds Karen Williams, 21, a Manhattan secretary: "He has music out right now, so I'm not going to buy any of that." Several radio stations stopped playing his music, and even Oprah Winfrey, who is dedicating her March 12 show to dating violence, chimed in during her March 6 show: "I've been saying this to women for years: 'If a man hits you once, he will hit you again.'"

Rihanna does not seem overly concerned for her safety. In court, her attorney told Commissioner

“
Rihanna is the biggest player shaping what happens next. She can make or break the case”

—LEGAL EXPERT STEVE SITKOFF

Kristi Lousteau that the singer did not want a stay-away order for Brown, who was instead served with a light protective order prohibiting him from striking or threatening her—but allowing the couple to be together. Says a source who knows them socially: "They're still in love."

In fact, they've been together "nonstop," says an insider—that is, when Brown hasn't been working on his third album (due later this year) or shooting hoops with buddies. As for Rihanna, who continues to stay out of the public eye, "She's doing all right," fellow R&B star and longtime pal Shontelle tells PEOPLE. "She's hanging in there and wants everyone to know she appreciates all the love and support." But like many of Rihanna's fans, Shontelle is uncertain about whether Rihanna's relationship with Brown will last. "I don't know," she says. "We'll see."

By Joey Bartolomeo, Howard Breuer, Pernilla Cedenheim, Jessica Herndon, Ken Lee and Elizabeth Leonard in Los Angeles, **Nina Burleigh, Kathy Ehrich Dowd and Liz McNeil** in New York City and **Wendy Grossman** in Virginia

TALKING TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT RIHANNA & CHRIS BROWN

The Chris Brown/Rihanna case can make for awkward conversation, but it's a discussion worth having: In a 2008 study of more than 2,000 tweens, teens and parents by Teenage Research Unlimited, nearly half of 15- to 18-year-old girls in relationships reported they were verbally, physically or sexually abused. "Parents should treat this [like] a discussion about drugs," says Ann Burke, who cofounded the anti-dating-violence group MADE after

her daughter Lindsay Ann was killed by a boyfriend. "You can talk about how Chris [allegedly] hit Rihanna and that's not acceptable." For grade-school kids, relate the situation to bullying and explain that friendships are built on "equality, respect and trust." Since abused teens confide more in pals than parents, Burke says to keep talking: "Tell your kids, 'If anything ever happens, we're here for you.'" For info: www.loveisnotabuse.com/made