

## Ring The Alarm: Beyoncé Is Not A Diva

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[http://www.thenubianoproject.com/2006/beyonce\\_rta.pdf](http://www.thenubianoproject.com/2006/beyonce_rta.pdf)

Before beginning, let's set the record straight: this is not a hate-Beyoncé piece.

This comprehensive survey was written to reveal one simple fact: *Beyoncé is not a diva.*

To be frank, over the years, the media has “anointed” the “star” of Destiny’s Child with a title that she unrightfully deserves: diva. This article is not meant to discount or ignore the talents Beyoncé possesses but, rather, to make the following clarification: *Although Beyoncé is the lone “survivor” of Destiny’s Child breakup (and she became an international superstar in the process), Beyoncé is not a diva.*

Here are the facts:

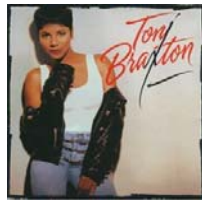
**FACT #1: Although Beyoncé has won nine Grammys, only one is attributed solely to her: Best Female R&B Vocal Performance (2003) for "Dangerously In Love 2".**

Yes, Beyoncé has won nine Grammys. And, yes, Beyoncé has tied with Lauryn Hill, Alicia Keys and Norah Jones for the most number of Grammy awards presented to a female artist in a single night: five. The smoke and mirrors of numbers, however, blinds the truth: *Unlike her peers, Beyoncé has never won (or been nominated for) the Grammy’s “Big Four” – Record of the Year, Album of the Year, Song of the Year or Best New Artist.* Besides her lone achievement, three Grammys are associated with her stint with Destiny’s Child<sup>i</sup>, while the remaining six stemmed from collaborations<sup>ii</sup>. And, although Beyoncé has sequestered 9 Grammys, all are limited to following categories: Rap and R&B. So much for her mainstream appeal.

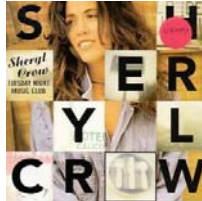
### U.S. Sales Comparison of Select Best New Artist Grammy Winners



**Mariah Carey**  
Mariah Carey  
(1990)  
**9 Million**



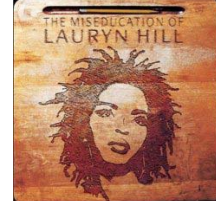
**Toni Braxton**  
Toni Braxton  
(1993)  
**8 Million**



**Sheryl Crow**  
Tuesday Night...  
(1993)  
**7 Million**



**LeAnn Rimes**  
Blue  
(1996)  
**6 Million**



**Lauryn Hill**  
The Miseducation Of...  
(1999)  
**8 Million**



**Christina Aguilera**  
Christina Aguilera  
(1999)  
**8 Million**



**Alicia Keys**  
Songs in A Minor  
(2001)  
**6 Million**



**Norah Jones**  
Come Away With Me  
(2002)  
**10 Million**

The debut albums of Mariah Carey, Toni Braxton, Sheryl Crow, LeAnn Rimes, Lauryn Hill, Christina Aguilera, Alicia Keys and Norah Jones sold several million more than Beyoncé’s “breakout” album, *Dangerously in Love*.<sup>iii</sup>



**Beyoncé**  
Dangerously in Love  
(2003)  
**4 Million**

The “fuzzy math” of Beyoncé’s Grammy count distorts and magnifies her musical achievements. Of Lauryn Hill’s eight, she can lay personal claim to three. Of Alicia Keys’ nine, five are hers alone. Of Norah Jones’ eight, she does not have to share three. Of Beyoncé’s nine, she can attribute only one to solely her own work. Thus, even among her contemporaries, without referencing *established* divas,

Beyoncé does not compare. Moreover, Lauryn Hill, Alicia Keys and Norah Jones have all be nominated for (and won) the Grammy’s Best New Artist award.

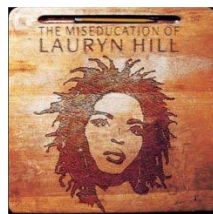
It is interesting to point out that adulation of Beyoncé, among her industry’s peers, was particularly spotty, even as they doled out five Grammy’s for *Dangerously in Love*. In 2004, Beyoncé lost out on a Best New Artist nod to Evanescence, 50 Cent, Fountains Of Wayne, Heather Headley and Sean Paul. Beyoncé’s absence from the list, while receiving nominations in other categories, was an industrial-sized slap-in-the-face. Of her contemporaries, the Best New Artist Grammy has gone to Mariah Carey (1991), Toni Braxton (1994), Sheryl Crow (1995), LeAnn Rimes (1997), Paula Cole (1998), Lauryn Hill (1999), Christina Aguilera (2000), Shelby Lynne (2001), Alicia Keys (2002) and Norah Jones (2003). Needless to say, despite the “rise” of Beyoncé, it’s not far-fetched to assume that there was no oversight of her capabilities, let alone her industrial significance<sup>iv</sup>.

**FACT #2: Although Beyoncé scored a #1 Billboard Hot 200 album with *Dangerously in Love*, it has only sold 4 million inside the United States.**

Although *Dangerously in Love* sold a respectable amount, the album should, however, for significance’s sake, be scrutinized in context to (and in comparison against) Beyoncé’s past offerings with Destiny’s Child, as well as those of her fellow contemporaries. In regards to her past offerings, I will use Destiny’s Child’s *The Writing’s on the Wall* and *Survivor* as benchmarks, by which she will be compared, since these albums were released before Beyoncé’s solo effort. In regards to her solo effort, I will compare her against Lauryn Hill, a fellow contemporary, who also jettisoned from a popular, best-selling group, in pursuit of a solo career.



**Fugees**  
*The Score*  
(1996)  
**6 Million**

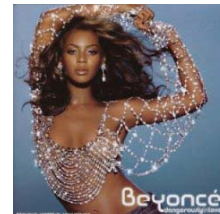


**Lauryn Hill**  
*The Miseducation Of...*  
(1999)  
**8 Million**

Lauryn Hill’s debut album, *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill*, was able to outsell The Fugees’ *The Score* by two million. In comparison, the sales of Destiny’s Child best-seller, *The Writing’s On The Wall*, eclipses Beyoncé’s debut by several million.<sup>v</sup>



**Destiny’s Child**  
*The Writing’s On...*  
(1999)  
**8 Million**



**Beyoncé**  
*Dangerously in Love*  
(2003)  
**4 Million**

Stateside, Destiny’s Child’s *The Writing’s on the Wall* sold 8 million and *Survivor*, its follow-up, sold 4 million copies, of which 663,000 were sold in its first week of release. While *Dangerously in Love* matched the sales of *Survivor*, in regards to domestic sales, the album’s first week sales, which gauge the market’s anticipations for purchase, paled in comparison—totaling only 317,000 copies. For an established “star,” breaking away from her “less-talented” group members, it’s alarming that her “breakthrough” album, in regards to overall and first-week sales, only compares to the group’s second-best effort. And, when compared against the group’s magnum opus, *The Writing’s on the Wall*, sales of *Dangerously in Love* only reached the halfway mark. Thus, in this context, the group is still bigger than the star.

And, when compared against Lauryn Hill, to put things in better perspective, Beyoncé really falls flat. Even though Lauryn Hill launched a solo career in the aftermath of the Fugee’s *The Score*, which established the group as hip-hop icons, *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* sold 8 million copies—double that of *Dangerously in Love*—and besting *The Score* by 2 million copies. Lauryn Hill was able to prove that she could stand outside of the shadow of the Fugees. Beyoncé has not. She still stands in the shadows of Destiny’s Child. To match Lauryn Hill’s feat, Beyoncé would need to sell a diamond album—no small task, indeed. But, if Beyoncé needs help, she could ask fellow contemporary, Norah Jones, for some tips. Jones’ solo debut, *Come Away With Me*, has been certified for sales of 10 million—6 million more than *Dangerously in Love*.



## **Final Thoughts**

Some may wonder why I would take the time to write an editorial on such a non-earth-shattering topic as whether Beyoncé is or is not a diva. The answer, if solely for therapeutic reasons, is to call into question (and shine a spotlight) on what the world considers “good” music. Throughout the new millennium, the music industry has pushed the likes of Britney Spears, Ashanti and Hillary Duff to superstar status, while talented vocalists like Toni Braxton, Anastacia and Deborah Cox have faded into the background, with little fanfare.

All things considered, this editorial is the by-product of various “water-cooler conversations” I’ve had over the years. Without a doubt, the ebb and flow of corporate and consumer interests have jump-started and abruptly ended countless musical careers. Consequently, in such a volatile market, it is understandable that stars, like Beyoncé, use media machines to meticulously craft their persona, so that it can weather (and, hopefully, resist) external tampering. Unfortunately, for the world, the manufactured gloss of “Beyoncé”—concealing warts and all—has prevented music fans from establishing a personal connection that was possible with Janet on “Together Again”, Madonna on “Human Nature” and Tina Turner on “What’s Love Got To Do With It?” Thus, it goes without saying that, to enjoy Beyoncé completely, one has to do it visually. No heartstrings required.

Beyoncé’s music can not be appreciated with one’s eyes closed, as with Aretha Franklin or Whitney Houston. For music lovers, there is no internal chemistry or song for the ages to look forward to. Sadly, the songstress, along with the songs she sings, is nothing more than a manufactured good created solely for commercial profit. And, as with most things, in this day and age, art is no longer the name of the game. Beyoncé even alluded to this fact, when she announced that her forthcoming album, *B'Day*, was written and recorded in less than two weeks. Thus, from the outside looking in, the trappings of music’s “visual age” have trapped her.

And Beyoncé, of all people, should know that musical masterpieces are not crafted in two weeks. Despite the massive media blitz for *B'Day*, the album’s lead single, “Déjà Vu”, received a lukewarm reception at radio—stalling at #7 on the Billboard Hot 100 Airplay before making a quick descent. And the album’s second single, “Ring the Alarm”, seems uninspired—heavily resembling Kelis’ “Caught Out There”, in sound and style, and Janet Jackson’s “Rhythm Nation”, in her performance at MTV’s 2006 Video Music Awards (08.31.2006). All in all, *B'Day* may just be the beginning of the end for Miss Beyoncé, regardless if it goes gold or platinum in its first week.

As the record stands, in my book: ***Beyoncé is not a diva.***

## Sidenotes + References

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<sup>i</sup> Best R&B Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocals ("Say My Name"); Best R&B Song ("Say My Name"); and Best R&B Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocals ("Survivor") | [<http://www.grammy.com>]

<sup>ii</sup> Best R&B Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocals ("The Closer I Get to You" with Luther Vandross), Best R&B Song ("Crazy in Love" with Jay-Z and Rich Harrison, as songwriters), Best Contemporary R&B Album (Dangerously in Love with Tony Maserati, as the engineer and mixer), Best Rap/Sung Collaboration ("Crazy in Love" with Jay-Z, as guest artist) and Best R&B Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocals ("So Amazing" with Stevie Wonder) | [<http://www.grammy.com>]

<sup>iii</sup> RIAA's Gold + Platinum Database | [[www.riaa.com/gp/database/default.asp](http://www.riaa.com/gp/database/default.asp)] | as of 09/01/2006

<sup>iv</sup> In 2001, Shelby Lynne won the Best New Artist Grammy—highlighting the precedence of the Recording Academy's willingness to give a Grammy to older, "new" artists. (Shelby Lynne's first album, Sunrise, was release 1990—a decade earlier.) To boot, at the 2004 Grammys, the lone female nod went to Heather Headley, a Tony Award winner.

<sup>v</sup> RIAA's Gold + Platinum Database | [[www.riaa.com/gp/database/default.asp](http://www.riaa.com/gp/database/default.asp)] | as of 09/01/2006

<sup>vi</sup> Recording Industry Association of America [<http://www.riaa.com>]

<sup>vii</sup> "On March 16, 1999, the RIAA launched the Diamond Awards, honoring sales of 10 million copies or more of an album or single." | Sir Elton John, at the launch of the RIAA Diamond Awards, stated: "I think this is the biggest accolade you can be given because it means your fans have gone out and bought your records. And that's why we make records - for our public." [<http://www.riaa.com/gp/default.asp>]

<sup>viii</sup> Jewel (*Pieces of You*, 1995, 12 million); Norah Jones (*Come Away With Me*, 2002, 10 million); Alanis Morissette (*Jagged Little Pill*, 1995, 16 million) | [<http://www.riaa.com/gp/default.asp>] | as of 09/01/2006

<sup>ix</sup> Mariah Carey (*Music Box*, 1993, 10 million; *Daydream*, 1995, 10 million); Celine Dion (*Falling Into You*, 1996, 11 million; *Let's Talk About Love*, 1997, 10 million); Whitney Houston (*Whitney Houston*, 1985, 13 million; *The Bodyguard OST*, 1992, 17 million); Madonna (*The Immaculate Collection*, 1990, 10 million; *Like A Virgin*, 1984, 10 million); Britney Spears (*...Baby One More Time*, 1999, 14 million; *Oops!...I Did It Again*, 2000, 10 million) | [<http://www.riaa.com/gp/default.asp>] | as of 09/01/2006

<sup>x</sup> Shania Twain (*Come On Over*, 1997, 20 million; *The Woman In Me*, 1995, 12 million; *Up!*, 2002, 11 million) | [<http://www.riaa.com/gp/default.asp>] | as of 09/01/2006

<sup>xi</sup> In retrospect, what would "Crazy in Love" have been without Jay-Z's memorable quip ("yes sir I'm cut from a different cloth / my texture is the best fur, I'm chinchilla"), "Baby Boy" without the Jamaican musings of post-*Dutty Rock* Sean Paul ("top top – girl / me and you together is a wrap – dat girl") or "Check on It" without Slim Thug's infusion of hip-hop ("good girls gotta get down with them gangstas").

<sup>xii</sup> RIAA's Top Artist List | [<http://www.riaa.com/gp/bestsellers/topartists.asp>] | as of 09/01/2006