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Rimes big winner at Billboard awards

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Fifteen-year-old country singer LeAnn Rimes won the big award Monday night at the Billboard Music Awards, including artist of the year.

Rimes also won country artist, country album of the year, singles artist of the year during the awards show at the MGM tel-casino.

Singer Elton John and writer Bernie Taupin were presented a special award for "Candle in the Wind 1997," the Princess Diana single set a new world record for the biggest-selling single of all time.

The 1997 Billboard Awards, broadcast live on Fox Television, were determined by the magazine's year-end music charts, which are a combination of record sales and radio airplay.

The winners were:

- LeAnn Rimes, artist of the year.
- LeAnn Rimes, country artist.
- LeAnn Rimes, country album of the year, *Blue*.
- LeAnn Rimes, country singles artist of the year.
- Elton John, single of the year for "Candle in the Wind 1997."
- Elton John, singles artist of the year.
- Elton John, singles sales artist of the year.
- Chet Atkins, century award.
- Garth Brooks, artist achievement award.
- Spice Girls, album of the year for *Spice*.
- Spice Girls, new artist of the year.
- Puff Daddy, rap artist.
- Puff Daddy, rap single of the year for "I'll Be Missing You" with Faith Evans.
- Toni Braxton, female R&B artist of the year.
- Toni Braxton, adult contemporary artist.
- Toni Braxton, adult contemporary single of the year, "Unbreak My Heart."
- Dru Hill, R&B single of the year for "In My Head."
- Dru Hill, R&B artist of the year.
- Dru Hill, R&B singles artist of the year.
- Sublime, modern rock artist.
- Third Eye Blind, modern rock track for "Semi-Charismatic."

Judge refuses to block Amistad following charges of plagiarism

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A federal judge Monday refused to block the release of Steven Spielberg's *Amistad*, saying the moviemaker did not appear to have plagiarized a novel about the 19th-century mutiny aboard a slave ship.

U.S. District Judge Audrey Collins rebuffed a move by Barbara Chase-Riboud to stop the film's premiere Wednesday in New York and Los Angeles and its opening on Friday in the nation's 50 biggest markets.

But the judge said Chase-Riboud can press ahead with her lawsuit and try to prove at a trial her claim that much of the *Amistad* screenplay was stolen from her historical novel *Echo of Lions*.

"The judge said there was no reasonable likelihood of success on the merits of the case," Bert Fields, an attorney for Spielberg and his DreamWorks studio, said. "She took apart their claims of similarities and said these things appear to come from history."

Chase-Riboud said she was disappointed but was confident she would prevail at trial, which has not yet been scheduled.

"A preliminary injunction is the only protection a poor person has against a rich infringer," she said outside court. "I'm doing this for all writers."

The dispute has turned increasingly personal and vitriolic.

"What an irony that the renowned filmmaker who produced and directed *The Color Purple* would be a party to denying a prominent black American of letters and the arts her rightful recognition for raising public consciousness about slavery," Chase-Riboud's lawyers said in court papers.

The allegations challenge the reputation of Hollywood's best-

known director over a Spielberg calls "perhaps the most important of my career." In *Amistad*, Spielberg is attacking the award-winning novelist.

Actress-choreographer Allen, producer of *Amistad*, she began working on *Echo of Lions* before *Echo of Lions* was published.

"This is a great day for the world," she said.

The tentative ruling after the parties failed to reach a settlement behind closed doors.

Collins ruled that Spielberg had not established "substantial similarity" between her characters and those of her characters and those of the movie.

Fields said the movie's evidence that the movie's book is inconclusive.

Chase-Riboud's attorney O'Donnell, said DreamWorks' any possible settlement to give Chase-Riboud a play or story credit.

O'Donnell said he would trial that the screenplay received the credit for *Amistad*.

Franzoni, is a "rank plagiarist" who copied freely from *Echo of Lions* and claimed Spielberg tried to steal by editing out scenes at the last minute.

Spielberg attorney Fields said he would deny the charges. "We deny there was any copying," he said.

"Similarities between *Amistad* and *Echo of Lions* are similarities of history, he said." *Echo of Lions* chronicles the life of a 19th-century black American slave named Cinque, and the resulting legal case, argued by Quincy Adams before the Supreme Court.

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