

People & Places

People

Smollett out of 'Empire'

Singer Kelly charged with 'sexual assault'

CHICAGO, Feb 23, (AP): **R. Kelly**, the R&B star who has been trailed for decades by allegations that he violated underage girls and women and held some as virtual slaves, was charged Friday with aggravated sexual abuse involving four victims, including at least three between the ages of 13 and 17.

In a brief appearance before reporters, Cook County State's Attorney Kim Foxx announced the 10 counts against the 52-year-old Grammy winner, whose real name is Robert Kelly. She said the abuse dated back as far as 1998 and spanned more than a decade. She did not comment on the charges or take questions.

Kelly was driven to a Chicago police station in a dark colored van with heavily tinted rear windows around 8:15 pm Friday. He did not respond to questions from gathered reporters as he walked inside the building.

Police spokesman Anthony Guglielmi tweeted a short time later that Kelly was under arrest. He was expected to be held overnight before an appearance Saturday in bond court.

Kelly's attorney, Steve Greenberg, told reporters following the singer's arrest that one of the charges he faces appears to be tied to a decade-old child pornography case.

"Double jeopardy should bar that case," Greenberg said. "He won that case."

Kelly, who was acquitted of child pornography charges in 2008, has consistently denied any sexual misconduct.

Greenberg said he thinks prosecutors rushed to judgment Friday in charging Kelly, calling the singer "an innocent man."

"Mr Kelly is strong," Greenberg added. "He's got a lot of support and he's going to be vindicated on all these charges."

The arrest sets the stage for another #MeToo-era celebrity trial. Bill Cosby went to prison last year, and former Hollywood studio boss Harvey Weinstein is awaiting trial.

Best known for hits such as "I Believe I Can Fly", Kelly was charged a week after Michael Avenatti, the attorney whose clients have included porn star Stormy Daniels, said he gave prosecutors new video evidence of the singer with an underage girl.

Victims

At a news conference earlier Friday in Chicago, Avenatti said a 14-year-old girl seen with R. Kelly on the video is among four victims mentioned in the indictment. He said the footage shows two separate scenes on two separate days at Kelly's residence in the late 1990s.

During the video, both the victim and Kelly refer to her age 10 times, he said.

Avenatti said he represents six clients, including two victims, two parents and two people he describes as "knowing R. Kelly and being within his inner circle for the better part of 25 years."

"I don't know what the tape is," Greenberg said of the video Avenatti gave prosecutors. "We haven't seen it. No one's showed us the tape."

The new charges marked "a watershed moment," Avenatti said, adding that he believes more than 10 other people associated with Kelly should be charged as "enablers" for helping with the assaults, transporting minors and covering up evidence.

The video surfaced during a 10-month investigation by Avenatti's office. He told the AP that the person who provided the VHS tape knew both Kelly and the female in the video.

The jury in 2008 acquitted Kelly of child pornography charges that arose from a graphic video that prosecutors said showed him having sex with a girl as young as 13. He and the young woman allegedly seen with him denied they were in the 27-minute video, even though the picture quality was good and witnesses testified it was them, and she did not take the stand. Kelly could have gotten 15 years in prison.

Charging Kelly now for actions that occurred in the same time frame as the allegations from the 2008 trial suggests the accusers are cooperating this time and willing to testify.

Because the alleged victim 10 years ago denied that she was on the video and did not testify, the state's attorney office had little recourse except to charge the lesser offense under Illinois law, child pornography, which required a lower standard of evidence.

Each count of the new charges carries up to seven years in prison. If Kelly is convicted on all 10 counts, a judge could decide that the sentences run one after the other - making it possible for him to receive up to 70 years behind bars. Probation is also an option under the statute.

Greenberg said he offered to sit down with prosecutors before charges were filed to discuss why the allegations were "baseless." But they refused, he said.

"Unfortunately, they have succumbed to the court of public opinion, who've convicted him," he said.

Legally and professionally, the walls began closing in on Kelly after the release of a BBC documentary about him last year and the multipart Lifetime documentary "Surviving R. Kelly", which aired last month. Together they detailed allegations he was holding women against their will and running a "sex cult."

As recently as Thursday, two women held a news conference in New York to describe how Kelly picked them out of a crowd at a Baltimore after-party in the mid-1990s when they were underage. They said Kelly had sex with one of the teens when she was under the influence of marijuana and alcohol and could not consent.

Also:

CHICAGO: Actor **Jussie Smollett's** character on "Empire" will be removed from the final two episodes of this season in the wake of his arrest on charges that he staged a racist, anti-gay attack on himself last month in downtown Chicago, producers of the Fox TV show announced Friday.

The announcement came a day after Smollett turned himself in to police, appeared in court on a felony charge of disorderly conduct for allegedly filing a false police report, and left jail after posting bond.

"While these allegations are very disturbing, we are placing our trust in the legal system as the process plays," "Empire" executive producers **Lee Daniels, Danny Strong, Brett Mahoney, Brian Grazer, Sanaa Hamri, Francie Calfo** and **Dennis Hammer** said in a written statement. "We are also aware of the effects of this process on the cast and crew members who work on our show and to avoid further disruption on set, we have decided to remove the role of 'Jamal' from the final two episodes of the season."

In her capacity as filmed content head, Parry was the music giant's ambassador to



This cover image released by Diary Records/Island Records shows 'Hello Happiness', latest release by Chaka Khan. (AP)



Actor and director Robert Redford (left), receives an honorary Cesar award from actress Kristin Scott Thomas during the 44th Cesar Film Awards ceremony in Paris on Feb 22. (AP) - See Page 10



French actress Lea Drucker holds her Cesar Best Actress Award for the film 'Jusqu'à la garde' (Custody) during the 44th Cesar Film Awards ceremony in Paris on Feb 22. (AP)

Music

McCalla puts down cello

'Hello' mini bundle of joy

By Pablo Gorondi

Chaka Khan, "Hello Happiness" (Diary/Island Records)

With just seven songs in 28 minutes, Chaka Khan's "Hello Happiness" is a little bundle of joy, emphasis on the little. But you shouldn't feel shortchanged.

Consider it instead as a corrective to all those overlong, overblown collections of incessant sonic doodles and listen up as the iconic singer makes her feelings and intentions clear from the start: "Music makes me say/Goodbye sadness/Hello happiness."

Khan's clarity of purpose comes on the back of a dramatic awakening after the 2016 death of Prince, a close collaborator, which helped her confront her own addiction to prescription drugs.

The title track is a good sampler for the rest of the record - deep grooves, dancefloor beats and Khan's excellent voice, which, even decades since her days with Chicago funksters Rufus and a dozen years after her last solo release, has not lost the ability to create its own flow while forming a tight connection to each song.

The production from Switch and Sarah Ruba Taylor applies just the right amount of now sounds to classic disco and funk structures, with some space judiciously reserved for

rapturous reggae on "Isn't That Enough" and a gliding acoustic guitar and tap-tap-tapping percussion on cozy closer "Ladylike".

Leyla McCalla, "The Capitalist Blues" (PIAS/Jazz Village)

Look, Ma, no cello! After a pair of albums on which New York-born Leyla McCalla accompanied herself on her trademark instrument, "The Capitalist Blues" finds her on the tenor banjo and electric guitar, deepening her musical ties to New Orleans, her adopted hometown, while further referencing her Haitian heritage.

McCalla spices up her takes on relationships, everyday struggles and even the Syrian civil war with an alluring mix of styles, from R&B and boogie to zydeco and beyond.

Recorded at Preservation Hall, a stalwart of the city's traditional jazz scene, the title track shows off the New Orleans side of things, not for the only time, with a strolling tempo, a rumbling tuba and worries that giving it all leaves you with little left to lose.

"Money Is King", from Trinidad legend Neville Marciano aka "The Growling Tiger", also deals with material inequality, which is also the focus of "Mize Pa Dous" ("Poverty Isn't Sweet"), written and sung by McCalla in Haitian Creole. (AP)

Hollywood.

She secured Live Nation a post production deal for **Bradley Cooper's** Academy



John



Bowie

Award nominated "A Star Is Born", and had numerous projects on her development slate. (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: Warner Bros has set a July 16, 2021, date for its live-action/animated sports comedy "Space Jam 2", starring **LeBron James**.

Terence Nance, creator of the HBO show "Random Acts of Flyness", is directing the sequel. His credits include "An Oversimplification of Her Beauty", "Swimming in Your Skin Again" and "Univertlin".

The movie marks James' first major acting role. (RTRS)

Obits

Peter Tork dies

US comedian Stevens dead

LOS ANGELES, Feb 23, (Agencies): Prominent Los Angeles comedian **Brody Stevens** died Friday in Los Angeles, Variety has confirmed. He was 48.

"Brody was an inspiring voice who was a friend to many in the comedy community," Stevens' reps said in a statement. "He pushed creative boundaries and his passion for his work and his love of baseball were contagious. He was beloved by many and will be greatly missed. We respectfully ask for privacy at this time."

According to TMZ, Stevens was found in his LA home in an apparent suicide.

A regular at Los Angeles comedy clubs like the Comedy Store, Stevens was known for sets with a positive spin. In 2013, he was featured in his own Comedy Central special called "Brody Stevens: Enjoy It!" and was frequently a warm-up act on comedy TV shows like "Why? With Hannibal Buress", "Chelsea Lately", "Who Gets The Last Laugh?" and "The Best Damn Sports Show Period".

Stevens was also an actor in both film and television. His film credits include "The Hangover", "The Hangover Part II", "Due Date", "Blind Ambition", "I'll Believe You" and "R2PC: Road to Park City".

Peter Tork, the bassist and wisecracking character in the 1960s teen-pop sensation the Monkees, died today at the age of 77, a rep for the group confirmed to Variety. Speaking with the Washington Post, Tork's sister **Anne Thorkelson** did not specify a cause of death, although the guitarist had been diagnosed with a rare form of cancer a decade ago.

Tork wrote a blog piece for the Post about his diagnosis with adenoid cystic carcinoma after beginning treatment in 2009. Through most of the 10 years since, he had been able to resume an active musical life, participating in Monkees reunion shows as recently as 2016, and recording his own solo blues albums, the last of which, "Relax Your Mind", a Lead Belly tribute, came out in early 2018.

"There are no words right now... heartbroken over the loss of my Monkee brother, Peter Tork", **Mickey Dolenz** tweeted.

Michael Nesmith posted a lengthy appreciation. "Pardon me if I am being dogmatic - but I think it is harder to put together a band than a TV show - not to take anything away from TV shows," he wrote. "These days I watch MSNBC - mostly aghast at what I see - and what I am missing is 'madcap'. Peter Tork died this am. I am told he slipped away peacefully. Yet, as I write this my tears are awash, and my heart is broken. Even though I am clinging to the idea that we all continue, the pain that attends these passings has no cure. It's going to be a rough day. I share with all Monkees fans this change, this 'loss', even so. PT will be a part of me forever."

Pulitzer Prize-winning composer **Dominick Argento**, who wrote musical works inspired by the lives and literature of **Edgar Allan Poe, Charles Dickens, Casanova, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Henry James and Virginia Woolf**, had died. He was 91.

Argento died Wednesday in Minneapolis, according to Carol Ann Cheung, a spokeswoman for his music publisher, Boosey & Hawkes.

Known for composing in styles ranging from melody to dissonance, he earned the Pulitzer in 1975 for "From the Diary of Virginia Woolf", a composition for voice and piano.

He also won a 2003 Grammy Award for best classical contemporary composition for "Casa Guidi", recorded by mezzo-soprano **Frederica von Stade** and the Minnesota Orchestra.

Clark Gable's grandson, **Clark Gable III**, died on Friday morning at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital in Dallas, Variety confirmed with the Dallas County Medical Examiner's Office. He was 30.

"It's is with an extremely heavy heart we say goodbye to my beautiful son Clark," his mother wrote on Instagram. "He passed this morning. I will always be next to you my beautiful son. Mom."

His sister **Kayley Gable** also posted about the death on Facebook, writing, "My brother was found unresponsive this morning by his fiancé and didn't wake up... I Love You Clarkie I'm so sorry we couldn't save you my heart is broken and shattered RIP."