

Good Times

The Bristol Observer

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Our Night on the Town

Trey Songz was 'Ready' for success

By MIKE CHAIKEN
EDITIONS EDITOR

They say third time lucky.

And R&B singer Trey Songz is living proof of that phrase.

He already had two albums under his belt. But Trey, who will be opening for Jay Z at the Mohegan Sun on Friday, March 5, was still waiting to be pushed over the top for pop success.

His third effort, "Ready," however, was all Trey needed to show the world of music that he was a performer to watch.

"Ready," which was released last year, was recognized by the industry as one of the best albums of the past year when it was nominated for this year's Grammy for Best Contemporary R&B album.

Trey lost the Grammy to Beyonce. But that's not a bad competitor to lose to.

"I'm excited (by the nod)," said Trey

Asked about following up his first two albums to record what became "Ready," Trey said, "I definitely felt great going into making the album... There was something about it being the third time around... There was this feeling inside of me that it was make or break for me on this album."

"It's definitely my best album," said Trey. He felt that "Ready" would be the album that would change his life.

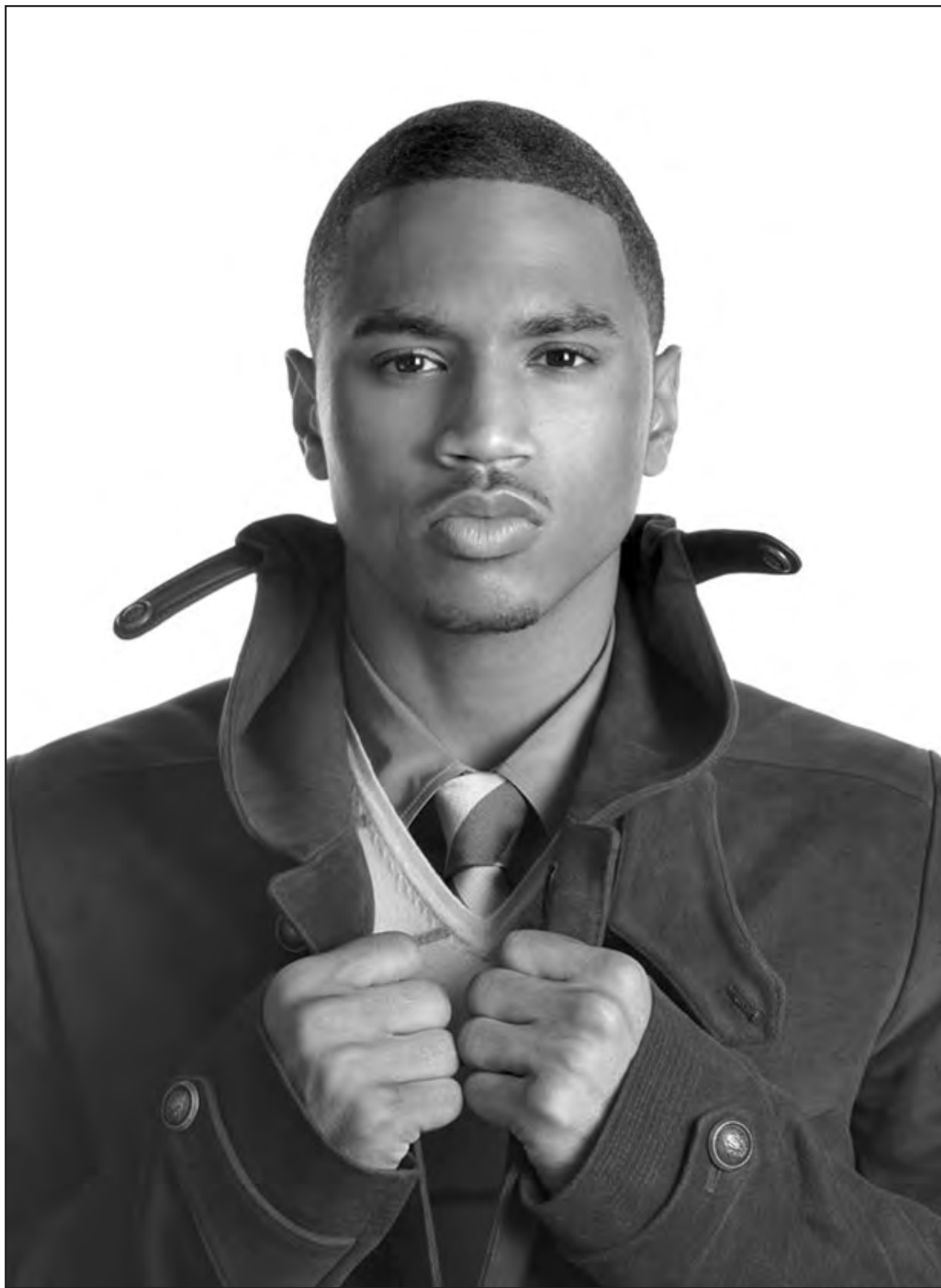
As luck would have it, that feeling turned out to be prophetic.

"I credit that to the fans, they've been with me since the beginning," said Trey of the success of "Ready" (which just went gold, having sold 500,000 copies.) As the album took shape, Trey took the unusual step of leaking songs through the spring and summer to his fans. He was trying to build up a buzz for the album. He also was getting feedback for where he was headed.

"I worked the hardest on this one," said Trey. "I gave it my all."

Trey said he set his sights on stardom when he was just 15. "Ever since then, I never lost focus. I never took my eyes off of (the prize)."

Trey said he remembers when he was down to



ANDREW ZAEH

Trey Songz will be opening for Jay Z this Friday at the Mohegan Sun.

his last 100 bucks. He's moved beyond that now. But, he said, "I still have that hunger grinding through me."

Trey also was welcomed into the world of superstardom when he was invited recently by Lionel Richie and Quincy Jones to participate in the remake of "We Are the World." The remake of the track, which was originally organized in the 1980s by Richie, Jones,

and Michael Jackson, is intended to raise money to help the people of Haiti affected by this year's earthquake. Besides Trey, the track features the voices of Lil Wayne, Barbara Streisand, LL Cool J, Kanye West, Tony Bennett, Usher, Pink, and others.

"They contacted my people," said Trey, when asked how he got involved with the high profile project. "They wanted me...

There was no thought process (involved). 'Let's go do it,' I said."

"Look at that mix (of artists)," said Trey. "It was amazing to be there."

Beside the chance to work with an illustrious cast of artists, the song also a chance to help Haiti, which appealed to Trey.

When he saw the devastation in that country after the earthquake, Trey said, "That hit me in the

heart."

"Haiti is my people," said Trey. "I've never been there. But Haiti is 95 percent black. Anything that is 95 percent black is part of me."

Not only did he perform on "We Are the World," he also helped Haiti by participating in BET's fundraiser "SOS: Saving Ourselves: Hope for Haiti," which featured the performances of artists such as

Mary J. Blige, Drake, Nas and others.

When it comes to helping Haiti, said Trey, "Anything (organizers) want, I will lend a hand."

"Ready" is an album that definitely sets a mood for romance and a night of lovemaking. It sounds as if Trey is standing in the studio, with scented candles burning all around him, the lights turned down low, and a bottle of Dom Perignon chilling in an ice bucket inches away from the microphone.

But Trey said he doesn't need any props to get him in the mood to sing his tracks. He said the mood he sets for himself is all in his imagination.

"I can record anywhere," said Trey. He's recorded in flooded bathrooms, two star hotels. "All I need is a microphone." And he makes wherever he's singing from sound romantic and sexy.

"That's what makes me who I am," said Trey.

Trey has the honor of being an opening act for Jay Z's "Blueprint III" tour, along with Young Jeezy.

"It's very surreal even two shows later (into the tour)," said Trey, who was calling from Dallas, the third stop of the tour. Trey said he remembers trying to save all of his money up to just see a Jay Z show. Now he's touring with Jay Z.

"I just go out there and try to put on the best show," said Trey of his chance to tour with one of the biggest names in not only hip-hop but contemporary music. "I'm there to get his crowd ready for him."

Trey said he has spoken with Jay Z about what was expected of him when he opened. "My show is part of his show," said Trey. And Jay Z told Trey that he wants the best out of his opener.

Trey said fans should expect his songs, including his new single "Neighbors Know My Name" and "Say Ah," to sound better on stage than on the radio.

"I give it my all, my heart, my soul," said Trey. "When I hit the stage, expect me to kill it."

For more information, go to TreySongz.com or MoheganSun.com

Comments? Email mchaiken@BristolObserver.com.