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# Jay-Z to Head Def Jam Label

By JEFF LEEDS and LOLA OGUNNAIKE

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**E**nding months of protracted negotiations, the rap megastar Jay-Z has agreed to take a job as president of Vivendi Universal's Def Jam Recordings label, according to executives briefed on the deal.

The pact, reached early today, puts Def Jam, the venerable hip-hop label, in the hands of one of rap's biggest-selling artists. Universal would hand Jay-Z, who has little corporate experience, the vacant position as chief of one of its biggest divisions, granting him authority over everything from album production to marketing strategies, and an artist roster that includes acts like LL Cool J and Ludacris.

The deal also marks a decisive victory for Universal and Antonio Reid, the chairman of the corporation's Island Def Jam Music Group, who had been working feverishly to secure Jay-Z as an executive and prevent him from lining up with the rival Warner Music Group, whose United States unit is run by the former Island Def Jam chief Lyor Cohen.

Jay-Z, whose real name is Shawn Carter, announced last year that he was retiring from making new music. Should he decide to



Brian Kersey/Associated Press

The rap megastar Jay-Z performs at the Allstate Arena in Rosemont, Ill., in September.

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return to the recording studio, any new music would have to be released through Universal, which still has a separate artist contract with him.

The new deal opens a major new chapter for the Brooklyn-bred performer, who has been quite vocal about his desire to become a behind-the-scenes boardroom player and to break the industry's perceived glass ceiling for black executives.

It also comes as much-needed positive news for the star, who was slapped with a \$75 million lawsuit by the R&B star R. Kelly last month after their joint tour collapsed in a messy dispute over missed performances and an accusation that a member of Jay-Z's entourage attacked Mr. Kelly with pepper spray.

Jay-Z's appointment is part of a broader agreement in which Universal will buy out the rapper and his partners' stake in Roc-A-Fella Records, a joint venture with Def Jam. Universal has agreed to pay the partners an estimated \$10 million for the remainder of the label, whose roster includes Kanye West, who received 10 Grammy nominations on Tuesday.

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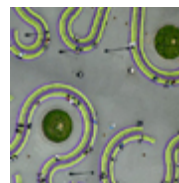


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