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Music Is Sales Driver For Hallmark

Retailer Seeks Recording Artists For '05 Exclusives

A deal with James Taylor that has the artist releasing his first collection of holiday standards exclusively for **Hallmark Cards** is an extension of the company's longstanding music-driven marketing efforts.

Hallmark plans to expand its music offerings beginning in '05 with releases focused on other holidays throughout the year.

For 20 years, Hallmark Gold Crown stores have sold holiday music CDs, with bestsellers moving 1.4 million to 1.6 million copies, says Hallmark's Ann Herrick.

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The 11-song "James Taylor: A Christmas Album" will be available only at Hallmark Gold Crown stores beginning in November '04. The CD will be sold for \$6.95 with the purchase of three Hallmark cards, or for \$10.95 with no additional card purchase.

Hallmark chose Taylor for the promotion after consumer testing rated him as an artist who transcends generations and has strong appeal with the chain's core base of women age 35-plus. They contacted Teri Brown of **T.B.A. Network**, who helped broker the deal with Taylor.

Hallmark is seeking additional artists who appeal to its broader base of females age 24-plus.

Hallmark wants to drive greeting card sales, drive traffic into stores, and increase membership in its Gold Crown loyalty club. Although specific sales results were unavailable, Herrick says that each holiday CD has generated sales spikes for greeting cards. "That's why we've continued this program for 20 years," she says.

Although the Taylor deal includes the right to use Taylor's image and his music on **The Hallmark Channel**, Herrick says the retailer hasn't started working with its sister cable channel on any tie-ins.

The CD offer will be promoted via radio and print ads, direct mail to Hallmark's database of 12 million names, e-mail blasts and instore signage beginning in October.

While Hallmark stores also continue their ongoing program of instore promotions for the original programming on the Hallmark Channel, Herrick notes that music in particular resonates for customers. "Music is [something] that people use to celebrate occasions," she says. "It expresses emotions, just like greeting cards do."

CONTACTS & CONNECTIONS

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