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## THE MEDIA BUSINESS

### Advertising | Lola Ogunnaike

James Taylor's got a friend at Hallmark Cards, where his Christmas album has gone platinum.

**B**YPASSING the record labels, James Taylor has sold one million copies of his new holiday album by offering it next to the greeting cards at Hallmark Gold Crown Stores.

"James Taylor: A Christmas Album" sells for \$10.95, or \$6.95 with the purchase of three Hallmark cards. Released Nov. 1, it was recorded for Hallmark Cards and will be distributed there exclusively this holiday season and the next one.

In selling the CD, Hallmark is taking a page from Starbucks, which has had tremendous success selling Ray Charles's "Genius Loves Company" and other releases alongside its chai tea lattes and espresso macchiatos.

"Our expectations from the beginning were very high," said Ann Herrick, integrated marketing manager at Hallmark, "but this project ended up exceeding our expectations and we all here are very happy about it."

Since releasing his last album, "October Road," for Columbia in 2002, Mr. Taylor has not been signed to a record label. This is the first holiday album that Mr. Taylor — known for 70's hits like "Fire and Rain," "Sweet Baby James" and "You've Got a Friend" — has released in his nearly four-decade-long career.

The 11-track CD features a duet with Natalie Cole on "Baby, It's Cold Outside," a blues-tinged version of "Jingle Bells" and other classics like "Deck the Hall" and "Winter Wonderland."

"Mr. Taylor is thrilled that so many people are getting to hear the music and that he had an opportunity to record this album," said Gary Borman, who manages Mr. Taylor and stars like Faith Hill for Borman Entertainment. "There were no financial-incentive issues to worry about and no artistic issues, either. It was a very fair sharing of the pie. It made it simple."

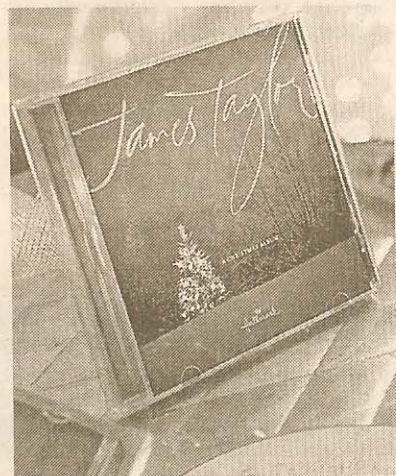
Ms. Herrick said that Hallmark began talking with Mr. Taylor early last year after focus group results determined that he was a favorite among its core consumers. "His name was one of the few that kept coming up at the top of the list."

Mr. Gorman said his client had no idea how well his album would sell. "Because this was fairly new water, we had hoped that it would do well, but there was nothing historical to build any measurement by."

Industry watchers say that more artists, particularly older acts who are somewhat out of the current music retail scene, will look to outlets like Starbucks or Hallmark for fresh opportunities.

"It would be silly for acts like Carol King and Crosby, Stills & Nash, who are not selling albums at the quantity they once did, to not take a serious look at these outlets," said Jim Guerinot, founder of Rebel Waltz Management, home to acts like No Doubt and Nine Inch Nails.

Teri Brown, founder of TBA Network, the entertainment-consulting firm that negotiated the deal with



James Taylor's Christmas album, which has sold a million copies in a promotion with Hallmark.

Mr. Taylor, said: "These albums are reaching people that aren't necessarily listening to the radio or watching commercials on TV." She added: "These people are walking up to the counter and seeing that a James Taylor album is available, and a lot of the times, it's an impulse buy."

In 2004, Ms. Brown brokered a similar deal for Hallmark with the Christian music artist Steven Curtis Chapman.

Based on the success of the holiday CD, Ms. Herrick said, Hallmark plans to expand its music promotion. A Valentine's Day album by the country singer Martina McBride is scheduled to hit stores in 2005. And Ms. Herrick added, "We're looking at opening it up to other seasons, not just holidays."

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