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Hallmark's New CDs Celebrate Special Days For Mom, Dad

Hallmark may be the first brand that comes to mind for greeting cards, but the company is hoping to further associate itself with hit music. Having already secured gold and platinum

sales with previous seasonally themed releases, Hallmark is adding Mother's Day and Father's Day CDs to the mix.

The card company has tapped country singer/songwriter Sara Evans and the Beach Boys for the mom-and-pop sets.

Evans' "Always There" arrives April 17, while the Beach Boys' "Songs From Here and Back" streets May 15. The former includes songs from Evans' past albums and two new tracks. The latter features previously unreleased live versions of Beach Boys classics as well as three new solo tracks from Brian Wilson, Mike Love and Al Jardine. Each title, priced at \$7.95

with the purchase of three Hallmark cards, will be sold exclusively at more than 4,000 Hallmark Gold Crown stores in North America.

Though the CDs are available for a limited time—maximum in-store shelf-life is two months—the specialty retailer has achieved gold and platinum successes with discs from James Taylor (Christmas, 2004), Martina McBride (Valentine's Day, 2005), Michael McDonald (Christmas, 2005) and Michael Bubl  (Valentine's Day, 2006).

Customer research revealed the sales potential for Mother's Day and Father's Day music platforms, along with which artists to feature, Hallmark integrated marketing manager Ann Herrick says.

Teri Brown, president of T.B.A. Network, brokers Hallmark's seasonal/holiday musical partnerships.

"You can't deny the reach of the Hallmark brand," Evans, a mother of three, says. As an artist, Evans says she is always looking for new opportunities that go beyond "releasing a record, sending it to radio and touring." This way, she says, "I have the possibility of exposing my music—and country music as a whole—to people who may not necessarily listen to it."

Evans will be the focus of a national Hallmark media buy that encompasses national TV and print. Chicago's Starcom and Leo Burnett agencies handle media planning and creatives, respectively. Physical and digital direct-mail promotions are also part of the marketing plan.

Evans, meanwhile, has created a Mother's Day greeting for hallmark.com. And a forthcoming Hallmark "song card" features Evans' "Born to Fly." Though "Always There" is

not a proper RCA release (Hallmark licenses the music for a two-year period), RCA Label Group senior director of marketing and artist development Debbie Linn says the label works closely with Hallmark's marketing department.

"We feed them Sara's equity markets and help coordinate things like TV bookings," Linn says. "We're working hand-in-hand with Hallmark to bring awareness to Sara that extends beyond her country base."

Personal Talent's Bruce Allen, who oversees the careers of Bubl  (Warner Bros.) and McBride (RCA), says he initially "fought the labels" for his artist's Hallmark deals. Labels had a change of heart once they saw correlation between Hallmark campaigns and spikes in catalog sales.

"Plain and simple, both sides win," Allen says. "How do you argue with that?"



A CD of songs by country star **SARA EVANS** will be sold at Hallmark Gold Crown stores as part of a Mother's Day initiative. There will be a Beach Boys option for dads.