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COLUMN: Norm!

Biggie questions still arise over who had rapper killed

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Local author **Cathy Scott**, an expert on the 1996 slaying of rapper **Tupac Shakur** in Las Vegas, isn't buying the Los Angeles Times' claim that rapper **Notorious BIG** promised \$1 million to have Shakur killed.

"It didn't happen that way. Biggie was a rapper, not a killer, and he was a mama's boy and not the thug Tupac was," said Scott.

"Biggie was accused early on, so that's nothing new," said Scott. "And everyone knows it was the Crips (a Los Angeles street gang) who shot Tupac.

"Who was behind it, of course, is the question. But (Times staff writer **Chuck**) **Phillips** didn't answer it. Biggie was not in Las Vegas the night of the killing, despite Phillips' claim. I interviewed Biggie's mother several times at length. She said Biggie was at her New Jersey house the next morning and cried when he heard Tupac was shot.

"It's easy to point a finger at a dead guy. The dead can't sue.

"It would have taken guts to point a finger at **Sean** (P Diddy) **Combs**, Biggie's record producer."

Scott, a former reporter at the Las Vegas Sun, wrote "The Killing of Tupac Shakur." An expanded second edition is coming out this fall.

Gagnon returns

Andre-Phillipe Gagnon is back, and so are the butterflies. But as bad as opening night jitters can be, he's had it worse.

There was his debut in 1985 on "The Tonight Show with **Johnny Carson**." Carson was so taken by the singing impersonator that he waved Gagnon over to sit on the guest couch. A high honor, but there was a big problem: Gagnon didn't know how to speak English at the time.

Imagine the knot in your stomach when you learn **Frank Sinatra** will be in the front row at a

NORM CLARKE
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Rapper Tupac Shakur was slain in 1996 in Las Vegas.
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fund-raiser in Gstaad, Switzerland.

"I did my version of Frank singing 'New York, New York.' I was petrified."

Sinatra approved, calling it "marvelous!"

And then there was the night of a royal gala in Ottawa, when Gagnon, seated at the same table with **Princess Diana**, got a special request from the princess.

"She asked me if I would do again the saxophone routine," a magical feat created through his throat and nose. "I couldn't resist. I was very charmed."

Gagnon opens at Paris Las Vegas tonight, where he will headline Mondays through Thursdays (9 p.m., \$60).

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The Scene and Heard

It came as a bit of surprise to MGM Grand execs when it was announced on Fox during last week's "American Idol" that a special featuring 30 "Idol" contestants would perform at the MGM Grand on Sept. 23. It wasn't even a done deal at the time. The taping will be the 19th. ...

George Carlin received the Las Vegas comedian of the year award Saturday at the Las Vegas Comedy Festival at the Stardust.

Sightings

Michael Jackson and family, back at **Siegfried & Roy's** show on Saturday, for the third time in less than a month. ... **Belinda Carlisle** of the Go-Go's, dining Saturday with friends at Spago (Forum Shops at Caesars). ... **Norm Crosby, Joanna Worley** and **Garry Owens**, checking out the Second City comedy show at the Flamingo on Friday night. ...The King of Pop, purposely arriving late and going unrecognized in the darkened theater at the **Danny Gans** show (Mirage) Thursday. Gans included a killer moonwalking rendition from Jackson's monster hit "Billie Jean." ... Las Vegan **Steve Harwell**, lead singer of **Smashmouth**, at **Cinderella's** concert Friday night. ... **Jamie Farr**, the cross-dressing Cpl. Klinger of "M*A*S*H," checking out the next generation of laughmeisters at the Las Vegas Comedy Festival at the Stardust this weekend. ... Former Brat Packer **Judd Nelson**, taking in **George Wallace's** show at the Monte Carlo on Thursday night. Wallace and Nelson just finished filming a Hallmark movie titled "Santa Jr." ... **Eddie Kaye Thomas** (Finch in "American Pie") at Baby's (Hard Rock) on Friday and the Foundation Room (Mandalay Bay) on Saturday, where he was a big hit with a bachelorette party from Maryland.

The Punch Line

"Never try to baptize a cat." -- **Eileen**, 8.

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