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Top audio books of 2007 are honored

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special to the Arizona Daily Star

Tucson, Arizona | Published: 06.02.2007

NEW YORK — The Audio Book of the Year for 2007 is "The Bible Experience — The New Testament."

An unbeatable source with an unbeatable cast of readers, including Denzel Washington and Angela Bassett, Samuel L. Jackson and Cuba Gooding Jr., "The Bible Experience" was produced by the Christian publishing house of Zondervan. The top honor was scheduled to be bestowed at the Audio Publishers Association's 12th annual Audie Awards Friday in the Rainbow Room at Rockefeller Center.

The award ceremonies are part of the weeklong BookExpo America, the annual convention for the publishing industry, meeting this year in New York City. Actually, religious, inspirational and philosophical themes did well overall in the 2007 Audies. "The Life of Jesus" by Paul McCusker, produced by Focus on the Family, won out in the Audio Drama category over "King Kong" and "Twelve Angry Men." "This I Believe," a collection of fundamental beliefs and personal creeds, edited and produced by Audio Renaissance, scored in the Short Stories and Collections category. "Hasidic Williamsburg, Brooklyn," narrated by Joseph Piekarski and Pearl Gluck for Oversampling Inc., took the prize in the Original Work category. And in the Spanish Language group, Dan Brown's quirky thriller "Angels and Demons," read by Raul Amundaray, won in translation for FonoLibro.

In Inspirational and Faith-based Fiction, the winner was "The Angels of Morgan Hill," read by the author Donna Van Liere for Audio Renaissance.

A new category, Judges Award, was limited this year to politics. The winner was "Hubris: The Inside Story of Spin, Scandal and the Selling of the Iraq

War" by veteran journalists Michael Isikoff and David Corn, produced by Oregon-based Blackstone Audio.

The top spots in other categories include "Restless," William Boyd's Cold War spy saga in Abridged Fiction, read by Rosamund Pike for Audio Renaissance; and Anna Quindlen's "Rise and Shine," two sisters in post-9/11 New York, for Unabridged Fiction read by Carol Monda (Recorded Books). Also, Sissy Spacek read "To Kill a Mockingbird" (Caedmon) by Harper Lee, which moved into the Classic category.

In Literary Fiction, the winner was "The Thirteenth Tale" by Diane Setterfield (Simon & Schuster). Best-selling author Michael Connelly's "Echo Park," in an unabridged version for Hachette read by Broadway actor Len Cariou, took the top slot in Mystery. The inimitable Frank McCourt, after scoring in past years with best-sellers "Angela's Ashes" and "'Tis," won in the Biography/Memoir category with "Teacher Man" (Simon & Schuster).

If you are looking for some good fiction to keep kids entertained this summer, try these:

- Up to 8 years old: "Knuffle Bunny" (Weston Woods) by Mo Willems is the story of an exciting trip to the Laundromat for a little lost stuffed rabbit.
- Ages 8-11: "Listening for Lions" (Recorded Books) by Gloria Whelan is described as offering "old-fashioned girl power."
- 12 and older: "Airborn" by Kenneth Oppel is young adult science fiction produced with a full cast by Full Cast Audio.

More than 800 entries in 32 categories were judged this year by 130 representatives of every branch of the audio industry — critics, booksellers, producers — according to Michelle Lee Cobb, president of the Audio Publishers Association.

Jim Dale, the popular reader of the Harry Potter series, once again was named male narrator of the year. Annie Potts, who read Larry McMurty's "Telegraph Days," was named best female narrator.