

Arts ENTERTAINMENT

Soul Food



Tracy Edmonds

It is Sunday evening, and the Joseph family has once again gathered around the dinner table for the weekly feast of soul food.

The tight-knit, but often embattled clan is presided over by "Mother Joe," or "Big Mama, as she's called by her young grandson, Ahmad. Dishing out generous helpings of love and sage advice, as well as fired chicken and black-eyed peas, Mother Joe is the family's anchor - its strength.

Mother Joe certainly has her hands full keeping this group together. Her three very different daughters - Teri, a career-driven lawyer; Maxine, a homemaker; and Bird, the struggling owner of a hair salon - don't exactly get along, as well as their husbands, one of whom is an ex-con, aren't making things any easier for their wives or Mother Joe.

When Mother Joe takes ill, the family's ties, always on the verge of unraveling, seem to be coming apart for good. As his parents, aunts, uncles and cousin battle over money, affairs and career-changes, it's up to young Ahmad, who's always had a special bond with Mother Joe, to come up with a plan to keep the family together and teach them the true meaning of "soul food."

Twentieth Century Fox Presents An Edmonds Entertainment Production, A George Tillman, Jr. Film **Soul Food**, starring Vanessa L. Williams, Vivica A. Fox, Nia Long, Michael Beach, Mekhi Phifer, Jeffrey D. Sams, Irma P. Hall, Gina Ravera and Brandon Hammond.

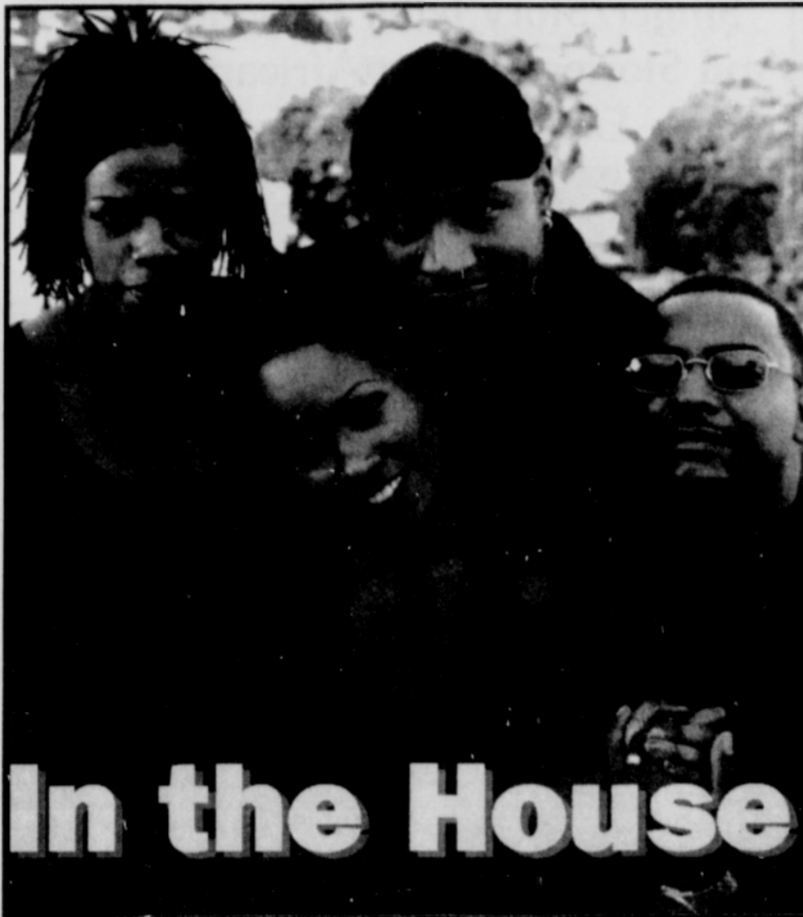
The line producer is Llewellyn Wells, and the co-producer is Michael McQuam. Music is by Wendy Melvion and Lisa Coleman. The film editor is John Carter, A.C.E.; the production designer is Maxine Shepard; and the director of photography is Paul Elliott. Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds is the executive producer. The film is produced by Tracey E. Edmonds and Robert Teitel, and written and directed by George Tillman, Jr.

Soul Food originated with writer/director George Tillman's own experiences as a child growing up in a very large Midwestern family.

Tillman was drawn back to his own favorite childhood memories of the massive Sunday afternoon dinners his Milwaukee grandmother served up to the whole family. While the women cooked and gossiped, the men talked and boasted -- and the whole thing appeared incredibly dramatic and magical through a young boy's eyes.

The power of those simple family gatherings was as explosive as anything Tillman experienced growing up in the urban Midwest.

In 1995, Tillman finally put these vivid memories and characters into final screenplay form, tapping into his feelings about the importance of family, his fears about modern threats to family bonds and his redolent memories of the mysterious connections between the stomach and the heart.



In the House

A former pro football player serves as a guardian to an outspoken 18-year-old girl while running a sports injury clinic with two unpredictable partners - an outlandish physical therapist and an egocentric doctor - in the half hour comedy series "In the House," airing Mondays (8:00-8:30 p.m., ET/PT) on UPN. Starring are (L-R) Kim Wayans as Tonia; Mia Campbell as Tiffany Warren; LL Cool J as Marion Hill; and Alfonso Ribeiro as Dr. Maxwell Stanton.

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Kyle Jason

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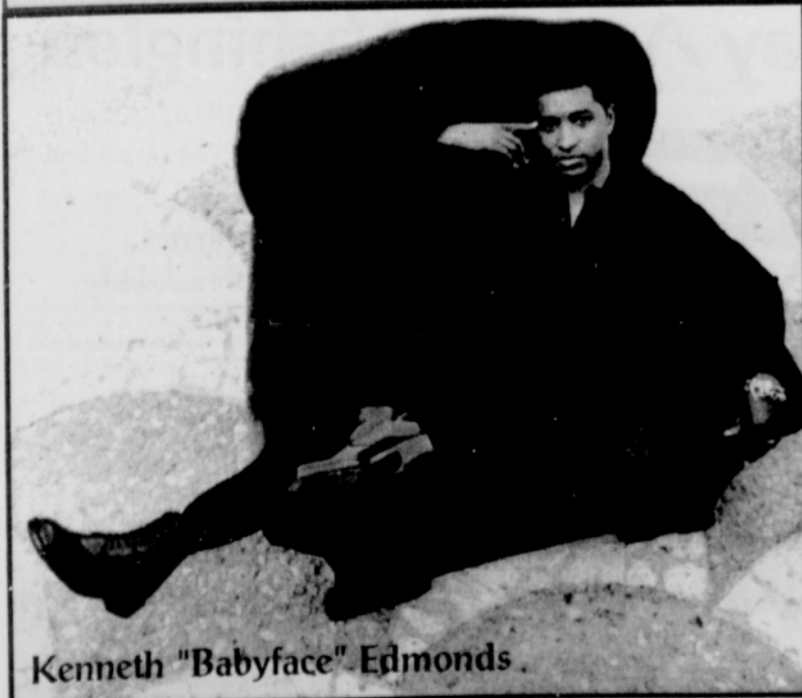
-A hustler's greeting - Kyle Jason

Slam Jamz/Columbia singer, composer, producer, musician Kyle Jason (street name "Ice") on his self-produced and composed EP, *Generations*, Kyle captures the flavor - redemption. Seamlessly linking vivid urban images, soulful tracks, powerful vocals and searing between-song narratives, the clearly conceptual CD is a brilliant debut. A prime example is the scintillating lead single "butter Baby."

Written by Kyle, who co-produced it with P-Funk legend Bootsy Collins, "Butter Baby" is about a gorgeous, seductive female who comes into a hustler's life as he's rising to big time street dealer prominence.

The *Generations* EP begins with the finessed funk of "Uptown," a Marvin Gaye inspired track explaining the hustler's reasoning for going. "...uptown to make my money." That track sets up the anthem, "The Life Of A Hustler," self-explanatory in its title, totally on target in its execution. Then, making a smooth, 180 degree turn in tone and texture after the poignant "She's Mine" interlude and "Hush" (coproduced with P-Funk legend Bootsy Collins), comes the lead single, "Butter Baby."

"Matter of Time," the CD's next narrative, makes it clear that the days of all hustlers' lives are numbered. "16 Stories," which has Curtis Mayfield sound and a timeless R&B flow, is the unequivocal fate-sealing cut. After a snitch rats him out, the hustler's next stop is, "D-Block," the state penitentiary, where the narrator reports, he meets his father for the first time. "Generations," featuring a guest rap by Chuck D, reveals the father and son's cell-block dialogue. "When We Come Around," the EP's exit track, offers hope, renewal and, yes, redemption.



Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds

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