

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

"Eve's Bayou"

"Memory is a selection of images. Some elusive, others printed indelibly on the brain. The summer I killed my father, I was ten years old..." --Eve Batiste



Lynn Whitfield stars as Roz Batiste and her children are portrayed by (l-r) Meagan Good as Cisely, Jake Smollett as Poe and Jurnee Smollett as Eve.



Jurnee Smollett, left, portrays Eve Batiste



Lynn Whitfield, left, is Roz Batiste and Debbi Morgan, right is her sister-in-law, Mozelle Batiste Delacroix.



Diahann Carroll, is Elzora.

Actress-writer-director Kasi Lemmons' directorial debut, *Eve's Bayou*, is a deeply poetic sojourn through Tennessee Williams country -- a moss-draped landscape which is evocatively Southern in its orientation. Using the point-of-view of the ten year-old Eve to tell her story, Lemmons' ambitious independent production uses a pastiche of stunning images, employed like verses of poetry, to create a hauntingly beautiful portrait of the seemingly prosperous and morally complex Batiste family.

Startlingly original in its tone and structure, *Eve's Bayou* has its roots in a woman's Southern Gothic tradition that encompasses such works as "To Kill a Mockingbird" and "A Streetcar Named Desire," and, though physically set in a small, backwater Louisiana community, the true topography of *Eve's Bayou* is a locale somewhere between the material and spiritual worlds, where truth and its perception can change shape, depending on the light of day.

Eve's Bayou celebrates a full spectrum of womanhood with a depth and freshness that is all too rare, even in independent cinema. Be it the bonding that goes on between sisters or an aunt's guiding relationship with her niece, *Eve's Bayou* movingly recounts a young girl's passage to knowledge over the course of a summer.

Self-assured in its storytelling and unwilling to settle for easy narrative answers, *Eve's Bayou* marks the auspicious writing-directing debut of actress Kasi Lemmons.

Lemmons' experience as an actress is clearly evident in the superb performances that populate *Eve's Bayou*. By telling the story

of the Batiste family through the eyes of the ten year-old Eve, Lemmons set herself the ambitious task of creating a child protagonist who embodied equal parts innocence and precociousness. As Eve, Jurnee Smollett portrays a girl who is brimming with provocative questions and intelligence but doesn't fully understand their implications.

Telling a story through the eyes of a child is no small feat, but Lemmons handles it with the expertise of a skilled craftsman. But credit must also be given to newcomer Jurnee Smollett, who brings Eve to the screen with all the confidence and subtlety of a seasoned actress and the innocence and wide-eyed wonderment of a child. Traveling in the wake of her sophisticated older sister Cisely (Meagan Good), Eve searches for her identity within a family whose own emotional center is in constant state of flux. But is perhaps these circumstances which serves as a catalyst for the young actress' extraordinary performance. As Eve matures from a child into an adult overnight, so too does Jurnee Smollett whose performance is as memorable as it is mature.

Another goal of Lemmons was to infuse her characters with the plaintive rhythms and complexities that are distinctly Southern. Samuel L. Jackson, with his laissez-faire charisma, manages to make Louis Batiste a sympathetic figure. There is dimension to his character because Lemmons, as both writer and director, has taken pains to make sure Jackson/Louis is not simply a "good" or "bad" man. We see that Louis clearly adores his family, but is also an unrepentant womanizer. As Jack-

son observes, "Women feed Louis' ego. Maybe he sees it as his consolation for not having an important medical practice in a big city." Jackson's wife, Roz (Lynn Whitfield) is the full embodiment of southern elegance and beauty -- an ideal mother. Describing Roz to his daughter Eve, Louis says, "she's the most beautiful, perfect woman I ever met," yet her formidable charms are evidently not enough to keep Louis from wandering.

With the economy of a poet, Lemmons uses the strengths of her ensemble to eloquently flash out her story. She understands that it is the details in her characters' lives that imbue the drama with emotion and resonance. The power of a look, a furtive glance exchanged between Eve and her sister Cisely, speaks volumes about the circumstances that engulf them. Even a simple gesture, such as holding hands, becomes an eloquent form of communication in the film. Working as a seer, Eve's aunt Mozella (Debbi Morgan) uses hand-holding as a bridge to the spiritual world. In a lovely grace not at the end of the film, Eve emulates her aunt. By taking Cisely's hands in order to seek the truth, she ultimately transforms the gesture into a comforting show of solidarity with her sister.

Creole culture's embrace of voodoo provides a fascinating other-worldly aspect to the storytelling in *Eve's Bayou*. Lemmons' characters may live and breathe in the material world, but regardless of whether they believe in it or not, their lives are touched by the spiritual. For example, you have Louis, a physician, a healer, who solves problems logically using his medical expertise.

Immature

If, as they say, the greatest journey begins with a single step, then Immature has just taken the biggest step of their lives. By now, the world has come to know Batman, Romeo, and LDB, watching them grow from precocious children to fine young men. The three have also blossomed into superb musicians and expressive artists in just a short span of years. But people, get ready: with their fourth and newest MCA album *The Journey*, Immature steps up and steps out with their most strikingly soulful album yet.

This time, the trio worked with several world-class producers, performers, and songwriters to help them out, including Keith Sweat, Rodney and Fred Jerkins, Bizzy Bones from Bone Thugs & Harmony, Dazz of the Dogg Pound, and of course Immature's long-time producer/mentor Chris Stokes. Moreover, LDB has taken on more lead vocal chores, lending greater depth to the group's vocal mix. Most important of all, the members of Immature envisioned a new kind of album that reflected the growth they themselves have undergone. "We've matured in our voices, in our music, everything," says Marques "Batman" Houston. "On this album we wanted a lot of beautiful ballads. We think our fans have been waiting to hear something slow."

Slow, but rocksteady. The album actually kicks off with one of the most adventurous tracks ever from Immature, "Give Up The Ghost," which features Bizzy Bones. With its eerie vocal counterpoint and rhythmic dazzle, the song showcases Immature's expanded range.



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