

# Focus

## The Wood

**D**on the panicky, uncertain hours before his wedding, a groom with prenuptial jitters and his two best friends reminisce about growing up together in Inglewood, California in the ensemble comedy "The Wood." Flashing back to the twenty-something trio's childhood exploits, the film captures the mood and nostalgia of the '80s era through the powerful beats and lyrics of some of the decade's most memorable hip-hop music.

Mike (Omar Epps) and Slim (Richard T. Jones) never thought they'd see the day their man Roland (Taye Diggs) would strut down the aisle to get married. Neither, apparently, did Roland, who ducks out just hours before the ceremony and turns up at the house of his high school sweetheart, Tanya (Tamala Jones). Though he adores his fiancée (Lisaraye), Roland sees the impending nuptials as a separation from those who have always been closest to him, his neighborhood partners from Inglewood, which they fondly refer to as the Wood.

After Mike (Epps) and Slim (Jones) track down their cold-footed friend Roland (Diggs),

they begin reliving their teenage days growing up in the 1980s an era of chasing girls, jheri curls, K-Swiss tennis shoes and hip-hop beats. As these three friends revisit some of their old stomping grounds, they know that two big words uttered later in the day will change their friendships forever.

"The Wood" is based on writer/director Rick Famuyiwa's vivid memories of growing up in the middle-class African-American neighborhood of Inglewood,

California with his boyhood pals. Famuyiwa originated the story idea several years ago when a friend of his announced he was getting married and he and Famuyiwa found themselves reminiscing for hours about the good old days.



Taye Diggs and Lisa Rae star in "The Wood."

Famuyiwa says interest in "The Wood" represents a shift in the marketplace toward new representations of African-American life.

"It was important to me to reveal the Inglewood that I grew up in," says Famuyiwa. "Inglewood is a middle-class community where people care about their families and want the best for their kids,

just like any other city. It has suffered from a lot of misconceptions," says Famuyiwa adding that like so any places in the world, "negative elements are only a small percentage of daily life."

Famuyiwa describes his debut feature as

a coming-of-age story. "I think everyone can relate to it because it's about experiences everyone has to go through. Adolescence can be a rough time; there's humor and pain in the experience, and friendship means everything during that period of your life."



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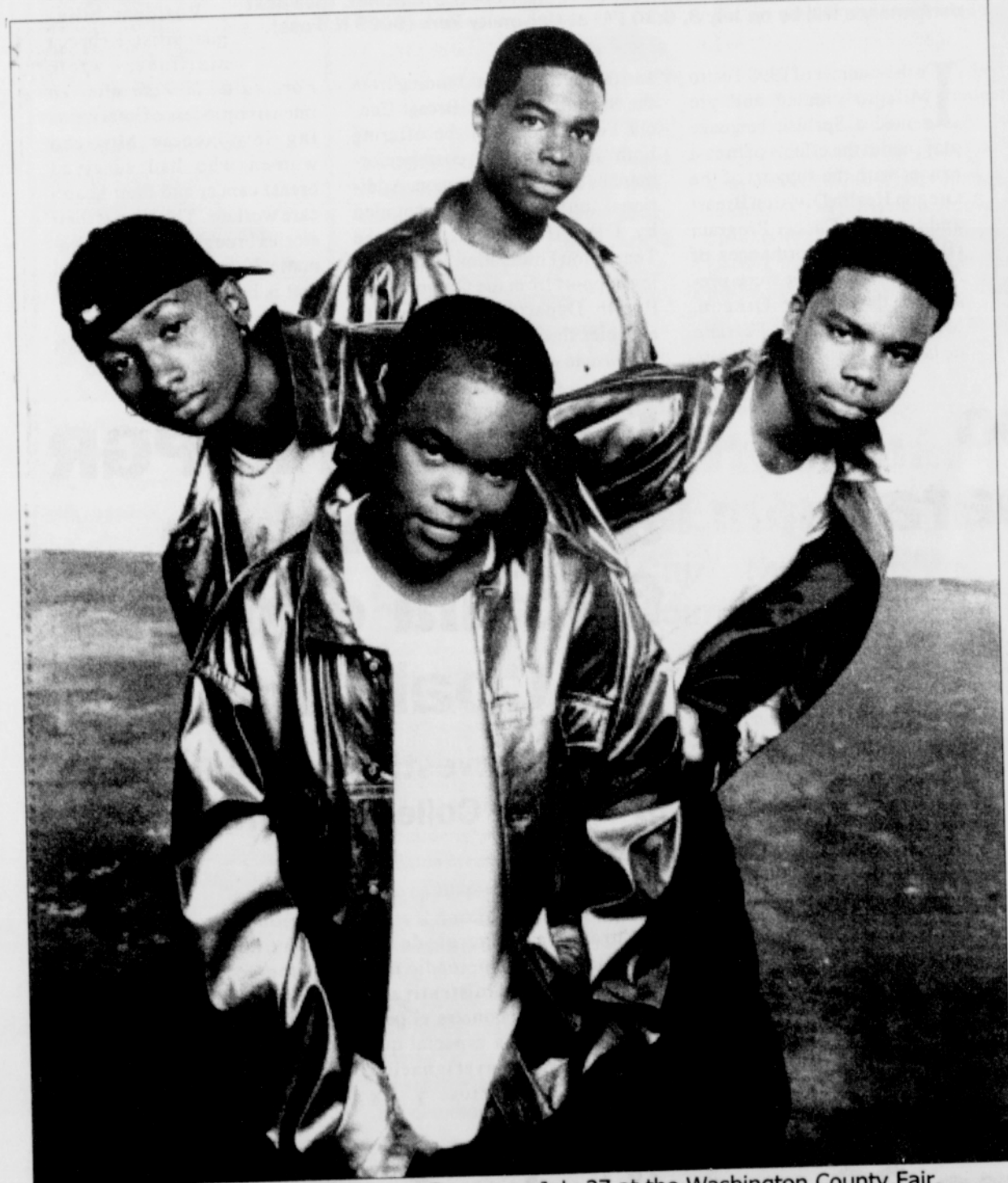
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## 3rd Storee

*On tour with Britney Spears*

**N**ot since the adolescent heydays of the Jackson 5 in the '70s and the around-the-way smoothness of New Edition in the '80s has a young male group produced such an effusive mix. 3<sup>rd</sup> Storee features the infectious lead vocals of 12-year Lil' Man and the bubbling harmonies of 15-year olds D-Smoove, Jay-R., and Kevonte.

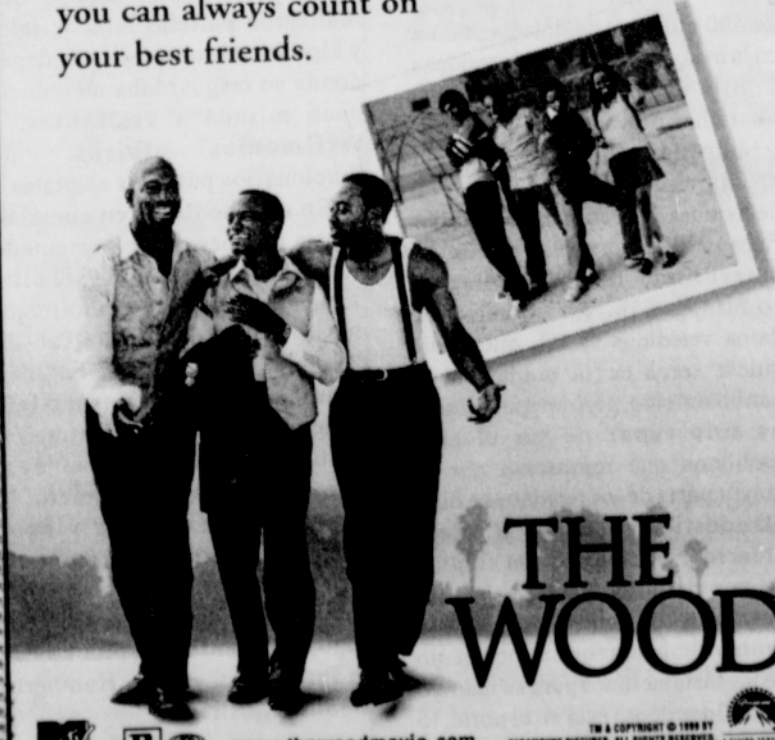
Five songs from the LA based quartet's debut were written by Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds, including the first single "If Ever" and anthemic ballad that boasts rich full choruses, stirring background guitars, and strings.



3<sup>rd</sup> Storee will be playing with Britney Spears on July 27 at the Washington County Fair.

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