

# Hollywood Casts Notorious B.I.G.

Brooklyn-based rapper will play late rap icon

Biggie is coming to the big screen. Fox Searchlight has hired Jamal Woolard, a Brooklyn-based rapper, to play late rap icon Biggie Smalls, a.k.a. the Notorious B.I.G., in its upcoming biopic "Notorious."

Derek Luke, Angela Bassett and Anthony Mackie also have been cast in the movie, the art-house studio said. Directed by George Tillman Jr. ("Soul Food"), it goes into production this month and is set for release in January.

Luke ("Catch a Fire") will play Biggie record producer Sean "Diddy" Combs, who off-screen is an executive producer on the film. Mackie ("Brother to Brother") will play rival rapper Tupac Shakur, while Bassett ("Akeelah and the Bee") will play Biggie's mother Voletta Wallace.

The production held an open casting call last fall in the hope of finding the next Notorious B.I.G., whose real name was Christopher Wallace, the generously built East Coast rapper who was killed in an unsolved Los Angeles drive-by in 1997.

The idea, executives said, was that as with casting for sports movies like "Miracle," the production would be better served with a non-actor who can rap and imitate Biggie than with a pro actor who might need to be taught how to rap.

Woolard, who also is known as Gravy, is not a total unknown. He has released a number of albums, though he's perhaps best known for being shot before a radio appearance outside the New York hip-hop station Hot 97 two years ago, after which he proceeded with the interview and became a part of hip-hop lore.

Like Biggie, Woolard was a drug dealer before he became a rapper.



Rap singer Notorious B.I.G. is shown on stage at the 1996 Soul Train Music Awards in Los Angeles.

He had released a number of albums on indie labels in the 1990s before being signed by Warner Bros.

Voletta Wallace cited "Jamal's charming personality, warm spirit,

wonderful sense of humor and beautiful smile" as reasons for the casting. "He is a talented and charismatic actor, and I am excited that he will bring Christopher's character to life," she said.

# Combs Denies Any Link in Shakur Shooting

Report called baseless, untrue

(AP) -- Sean "Diddy" Combs has denied a report by the Los Angeles Times that his associates were responsible for the 1994 robbery and shooting of Tupac Shakur at a New York recording studio, and that he knew about the attack in advance.

"The story is a lie," the hip-hop mogul said in a statement Monday. "It is beyond ridiculous and completely false. Neither (the late rapper Notorious B.I.G.) nor I had any knowledge of any attack before, during or after it happened. ... I am shocked that the Los Angeles Times would be so irresponsible as to publish such a baseless and completely untrue story."

The 1994 shooting triggered the celebrated feud between East and West Coast rappers that led to the killings of Shakur and B.I.G.

The Times said its story was based on FBI records, interviews with people at the scene of the 1994 shooting, and statements to the FBI by an informant. None of the sources were named. The story said that Combs — who was overseeing B.I.G.'s white-hot career at the time — and others lured Shakur to the studio because of his disrespect toward them.

The story said that talent manager James Rosemond and promoter James Sabatino arranged the assault. They and Combs declined to be interviewed for the story, which appeared on the Los Angeles Times Web site but not in its paper publication.

Rosemond called the story a "libelous piece of garbage." "In the past 14 years, I have



Sean Combs

not even been questioned by law enforcement with regard to the assault of Tupac Shakur, let alone brought up on charges," he said in a statement. "Chuck Philips, the writer ... has reached a new low by employing fourth-hand information from desperate jailhouse informants along with ancient FBI reports to create this fabrication. I simply ask for all rap fans and fans of Tupac to analyze this fiction for what it is."

The story, written by Chuck Philips, was the first investigative report published as a Web exclusive, said Meredith Artley, editor of LATimes.com.

"This piece was perfect for the Web," Artley said. "The Web audience skews younger. We had all these great multimedia elements, and we said we really don't need to wait to fit this in the paper."

# Ask Deanna!

Real People, Real Advice

An advice column known for its fearless approach to reality based subjects!

a valuable lesson and if they'll do this in your face, you didn't need them anyway.

**Dear Deanna!**

I'm a newlywed and now I realize that I don't want to be married. I dated my boyfriend for 6 months and things were great. Now that we live together, I see things I don't like, he's not nice anymore and I feel stressed out. I wish things could be the same as when we were dating. Our intimacy is suffering and I don't know what to do. How can I figure out what has happened and why this new marriage is so bad? -Married But Miserable; Memphis, Tenn.

**Dear Miserable:**

The marriage is fine other than the fact you got caught up after a short time and married someone you didn't know well enough. The drama, stress and responsibility begin the day after the wedding. You now have to look at the good, the bills and the ugly which comes with the territory. Have a talk with your husband and share your fears and feelings. As a couple he's there to help sort through things and get better adjusted to this new marriage.

Ask Deanna is written by Deanna M. Write Ask Deanna! Email: askdeanna1@yahoo.com or 264 S. LaCienega Blvd, Suite 1283 Beverly Hills, CA 90211. Website: www.askdeanna.com

**Dear Deanna:**

I'm in college and me and my peers have the same issues. We're short on money, have to do odd jobs to buy gas and we pool our money to buy food. Things are working out with the exception of one friend that isn't pulling her load. She rides in the car with us and eats the food but we noticed that she isn't contributing to the fund. We all have seen her with new clothes and manicures. How do we tell her that she needs to pay her money or she's out of the group? --Carla; Pensacola, Fla.

**Dear Carla:**

You guys are on the right track as you've realized early on that there is strength in numbers. You need to carefully document all the agreed upon activity within the group and demonstrate her lack of participation. Have a face-to-face discussion once you've verified a few things and can determine if her shortcomings are legit or bogus. If she's been getting over, then your friend is a freeloader and let her know that she needs to pay her way or get out of the group.

**Dear Deanna:**

I broke up with my boyfriend over something silly and now I regret my actions. I thought he was cheating on me with my best friend but they were actually buying me a gift. I said some horrible things to both of them and they're not speaking to me. I want to get back with him but I think he is looking at my friend because she seems more mature than me. What should I do if they start dating? I know it's my fault but it's going to tear me apart. --Made a Mistake; Atlanta

**Dear Mistake:**

You obviously have trust issues if you can't feel secure with your mate or your friends. Your foolish tongue has caused you to lose your relationship and your friend. The only thing you can do is apologize to both parties and ask your boyfriend for another chance. If he says no and goes with your buddy, then you learned



**Loan officer  
Motivational coach  
Counselor  
Colleague  
Neighbor  
Friend**

Phyliss Gaines is all of these and more. Phyliss has been a loan officer for PDC for eight years but is relocating across the county. While at PDC, she took 1,005 applications for various home programs, helped 36 first-time buyers purchase a home of their own; originated 282 home repair loans, 55 sewer connection loans and 101 grants to make homes safe from the dangers of lead. We've lost count of the first-time home buyer classes and fix-it fairs she has held.

**Best wishes Phyliss, and thank you for proving that one person can make a positive difference. We will miss you.**

PDC celebrates Women's History Month.

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