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ENTERTAINMENT

Tuesday • September 30, 1997

Soul Food proves good enough to eat

Movie Review

Soul Food
Starring: Vanessa Williams, Vivica A. Fox and Nia Long
Directed by George Tillman Jr.
Rated R
★★★★ (out of five)

By MANDY CATER
Staff writer

Family ties, wisdom and Sunday dinner. *Soul Food* tells the story of how tradition holds families together.

Mother Joe is a matriarch whose life goal is to hold her family together. A 40-year-old tradition of Sunday dinners keeps her clan united, through their ups and downs.

Joe's three daughters make her

task a constant trial, with sibling rivalry and marital problems constantly arising.

Vanessa Williams plays Teri, the eldest daughter, a beautiful, successful attorney whose marriage is on the rocks. The role is a break-out one for Williams, who gives Teri a complexity, both hard-edged and sensitive.

Maxine is the middle sister, a housewife and mother, played by Vivica A. Fox. Fox turns away from her action movie gridlock with a brilliant performance as a strong, wild young woman for whom success lies in the home.

Nia Long is Bird, the youngest sister, newly wed to an ex-convict, who has recently opened her own beauty salon.

Their stories are woven together by a young narrator, Ahmad, Maxine's son. Child actor Brandon Hammond is heartwrenching as the young man in the center of his family's storms. His connection to Mother Joe, or Big Mama, as he calls her, provide some of the more



Vanessa Williams, Nia Long and Vivica A. Fox star as sisters in *Soul Food*.

touching screen moments.

After Big Mama falls into a coma, the family's ties begin to come undone, and viewers are left to see the conflicts through Ahmad's impressionable eyes.

Soul Food succeeds where many movies fail — it gives realistic portrayals of the human experience. The well-developed cast of characters explore a range of emotions not usually seen in modern films. They are characters people can relate to, not shallow caricatures that are so often the norm today.

The strong ensemble acting and mouth-watering images of fried chicken, peach cobbler and down-home side dishes, *Soul Food* is destined to be the sleeper hit of the season. In a year of big-budget, over-the-top action films, *Soul Food* reminds moviegoers that worthwhile cinema still exists, it also sends a message to movie execs that bigger is not always better; sometimes simple themes such as sisterhood, a good meal and the ties that bind are all it takes to spell success.

WISHMASTER

Continued from Page 3

The lead actress, Tammy Lauren, is stunningly mediocre in the lead role as a long-suffering art expert who incurs the Djinn's wrath.

Sure, no one goes into horror movies expect-

ing a masterpiece. The poster of *Wishmaster* is enough to indicate that it is not the type of film people will be discussing over cappuccino and French cigarettes.

But horror movies depend on originality. And it can be done. Craven's *Scream* injected satire into the genre, and the result was excellent. John Carpenter seems incapable of directing a horror

movie that is less than literate and original.

So there is no excuse for a movie that looks like a Tool video with worse music, and that has a villain saying things like, "I can smell your feecar!"

No excuse except for the income this film will almost certainly derive from giggly high-school students. Wes Craven, after all, is a very rich man.

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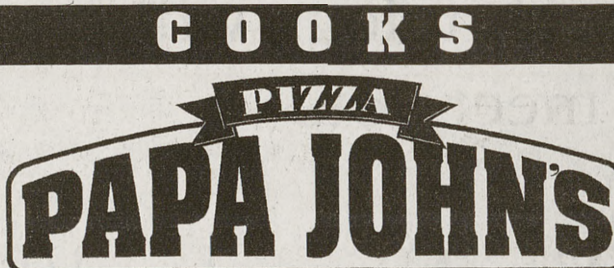
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