

# Plot proves too faint in 'The Five Heartbeats'

By Gerri Pare  
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — The struggles and successes of a fictional black singing group gets spirited treatment in "The Five Heartbeats" (20th Century Fox).

The year is 1965 and the five men — two brothers and three friends — are showing their suave soul sound and synchronized steps in local talent competitions.

Duck (Robert Townsend) is their songwriter; his brother, J.T. (Leon), the group's ladies' man; dresser (Harry J. Lennix) is the choreographer; Eddie (Michael Wright) the insecure lead singer; and Choirboy (Tico Wells), a preacher's son eager to sing more gospel music.

The quintet finds success when it finds a caring manager (Chuck Patterson) and soon is signed by the record label of devious Big Red (Hawthorne James).

But with success comes heartache, exploitation and infighting. Drugged-out Eddie departs and the brothers become estranged when both fall in love with the same woman (Carla Brothers).

Years after the bitter breakup, the healing power of love gets them beating in sync again.

Not much soul can be found in this movie, which Townsend co-wrote with Keenen Ivory Wayans. The movie also marks Townsend's first directorial effort since "Hollywood Shuffle," his clever 1987 satire on Tinseltown racism.

This time he's got the big-time budget, more mainstream appeal and a lot of heart. Too bad it turns out to be a bubble-gum movie for baby-booming nostalgia junkies.

The look and treatment seem as glossy as



Cliff Lipson/Twentieth Century Fox

**The Five Heartbeats experience a meteoric rise as their first hit single explodes across the country. The film stars (rear, left to right): Robert Townsend as Duck, Leon as J.T., Harry J. Lennix as Dresser, Tico Wells as Choirboy and (front) Michael Wright as Eddie.**

the lacquered bouffant hairdos. A lively soundtrack of original and Motown sounds makes it a mostly upbeat trip, and the redemptive theme at the end a wholly positive one.

Because of considerable sexual innuendo, occasional violence and intermittent rough language, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

## 'Secret of the Ooze'

Those half-human, half-turtle teen terrors are up to good again in the live-action, tongue-tiring sequel, "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II: The Secret of the Ooze" (New Line).

This time the hip, fighting foursome and their contemplative rodent father-figure, Splinter, are camping out at crusading journalist April O'Neil's (Paige Turco)

place until they find new digs below New York City.

The pizza delivery boy, Keno (Ernie Reyes Jr.), tells them that the thieving Foot Clan gang, headed by their nemesis, Shredder (Francois Chau), is active again and there's real cause for alarm: a vial of toxic ooze is out there. And if Shredder gets his hands on the ooze, he could bring the city to its knees.

Despite a heroic battle with the turtles, the Foot Clan does manage to steal the vial and force its creator, Professor Perry (David Warner), to sprinkle droplets of ooze on two baby animals, who promptly become giant snarling monsters.

Shredder pits the baby beasts against the turtles, then runs for cover. Neither side wins but later the turtles receive an ominous message — face a showdown that night with Shredder and the now-intensely oozed monsters or the city will be trashed.

Lots of action can be found in director Michael Pressman's fast-paced kiddy caper, but no character development to keep it interesting. As in the original, the four characters have interchangeable personalities and of course the bad guys are totally black hat.

Some subterranean visuals and the new monsters from the late Jim Henson's workshop make the story appealing to the eye.

Yet the frequency of the violence and its presentation as the best way to settle problems make the movie inadvisable for young and impressionable children.

Because of the slapstick martial arts violence, the USCC classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

# HIDDEN MEADOWS

COMMUNITY

7289 Lake Road, Bergen, New York 14416  
(1 Mile South of Rte. 33 & 19) 716/494-1424

Luxurious Homes  
Designed for Easy Living as you look forward to retirement.

**NOW AVAILABLE** — This lovely two bedroom home is available for immediate occupancy. Only one-year-old, and located on a large wooded lot, it will be open for inspection along with four others at our Open House this Sunday, April 28th.

## OPEN HOUSE

SUNDAY, APRIL 28TH

5 Models Open for Inspection  
From 1 P.M. to 4 P.M.

Refreshments will be served in the Club House

**MOLLONS POND** — A popular picnic spot located at the east end of the community.

**CLUB HOUSE** — A gathering spot for community activities, barbecues and social functions, our Club House has allowed everyone to share many memorable times.

**A HOME WITH A VIEW** — A view of Hill Top Drive. Perhaps you know someone who lives here?

**GAME DAY** — Bill, Fred, Carl and Paul take time from their Horseshoes match to pose for a snapshot.

**A Friendly Atmosphere Offering...**

- Club House for Community Activities
- Planned Special Events
- Chipping & Putting Green
- Organized Trips