

DESTINY'S CHILD

by Tamela Meredith Partridge

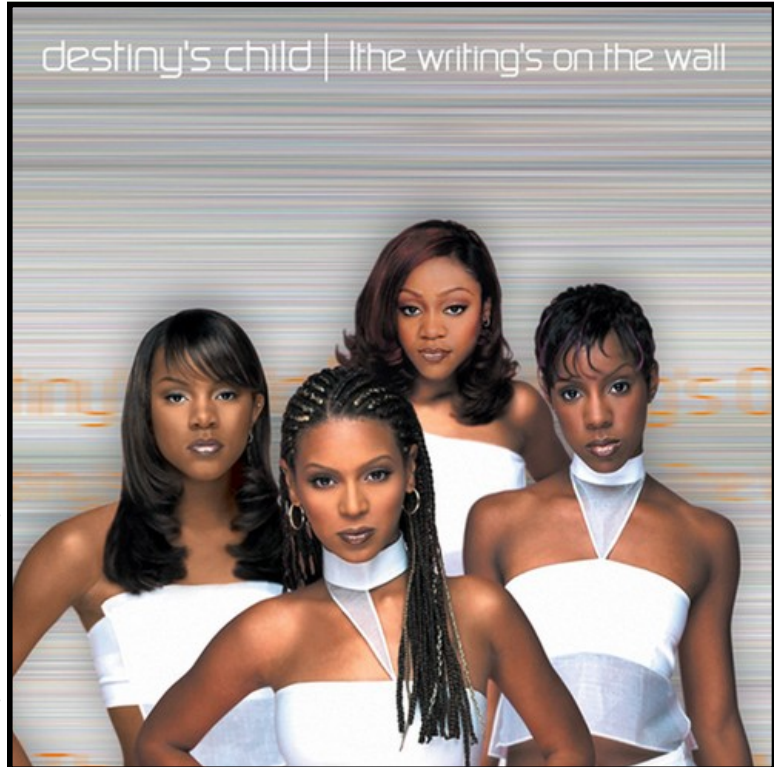
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There are four basic rules a child of destiny follows - making peace with the past, enjoying the present, anticipating the future and believing that a power greater than one's self presides over the course of life events.

And when it comes to the musical careers of multi-platinum R& B group Destiny's Child founding members - Beyoncé (rhymes with fiancé) Knowles, 18, Kelly Rowland, 19, La Tavia Roberson, 18, and Le Toya Luckett, 19 - fate has certainly lent a guiding hand through times of joy as well as those of sorrow.



Under the direction of Music World Management's Mathew Knowles, (Beyoncé's father), the Houston, Texas-based foursome first came together at age ten with an incredibly mature vocal blend far surpassing their young age.

"We've been singing together for so long and know each other's voices so well, we just naturally bring out the best in each other when we're in the studio or on stage," Kelly says.

The quartet acquired their name when Beyoncé's mom was looking through the bible and a picture of the four girls fell out from a passage of scripture entitled destiny. Adding the word child at the end, instead of children, symbolically represents their desire to seamlessly incorporate four distinct musical influences and voices into one.

"As a group we've sometimes been compared to En Vogue or the young Supremes when we first came out," says Beyoncé, who sings lead vocals. "These are groups we've really looked up to and when people compare Destiny's Child to them, that's a compliment."

Working their way out of the shadows of obscurity into the light of fame was often a long and tedious process for the struggling newcomers.

"We had some major disappointments," says Kelly, the second lead vocalist. "But, they only made us stronger and more determined than ever to make it. Plus we all believe in God, and know that He's always been on our side."

Enticing listeners with their well-crafted classic R&B, talented hip hop flair and timeless soul helped the vocalists acquire a '92 appearance on the television show "Star Search."

"We were kind of nervous about it," says background alto vocalist, La Tavia. "They made us do a rap song, although we wanted to sing. They even made a new hip-hop category for us. Looking back on it now though, it was a learning experience we'll never forget."

Their multi-generational appeal of youthful exuberance, smooth stage presence and sensual style eventually led to sharing the stage with some of the hottest R&B and hip-hop acts in the business.

"When they came to Houston to perform, we opened for people like Immature, Dru Hill, Das EFX and SWV, who all gave us nothing but love, hope and encouragement," Kelly says.

Landing a recording contract with Columbia Records resulted in '98 self-titled debut album and it's phenomenally successful platinum single, "No, No, No."

"That was our turning point and we all knew it," Beyonce says. "So when it was time to make our album, we never looked back. We were so glad to finally have the opportunity that all of the problems of the past seemed to disappear."

Remembering to stay firmly grounded in reality while reaching astronomical heights of musical stardom grants Destiny's Child a down-to-earth perspective on international celebrity status.

"It's fun being recognized by fans," says background soprano vocalist, Le Toya. "But when you're in show business you always have to be smiling and have a positive attitude. - even though your day might be going badly. You can't have a negative attitude, because if you do that to the wrong people, then you can ruin your career....But for the most part, the people we meet don't treat us like 'superstars.' They treat us like home girls! I sign autographs and I try to treat everybody like I want to be treated."

Destiny's Child artfully dodged the sophomore jinx with 4 times platinum '99 album, "The Writing's On The Wall" and it's three smash singles, "Bills, Bills, Bills," "Bug A Boo," and "Say My Name."

"The reason we named the CD "The Writing's On The Wall" is because when you see the writing on the wall it means that you're seeing everything at point blank range," Kelly says. "There aren't any ifs, ands, or buts about it. And when you hear the songs, you know what the songs are about - relationships."

After singing together for more than half their lives, a melodic twist of irreconcilable management issues split Destiny's Child in two in late '99. As a result, Michelle Williams, 18, and former Rockford, Illinois native, Farrah Franklin, 19, replaced departing band members La Tavia and Le Toya in early 2000.

The two new Destiny's Child performers debuted in the group's video for current single "Say My Name." Both Michelle and Farrah have a prior history with founding members Beyonce and Kelly consisting of Farrah dancing in the group's video for No. 1 single, "Bills, Bills, Bills," while Michelle met the two vocalists during her stint as a background singer for Monica.

The new Destiny's Child are slated to hit the road in August as opening act entertainment for pop diva Christina Aguilera's 37-city "Sears and Levi Jeans" late summer tour.

"We couldn't be more excited that Farrah and Michelle have joined us," Beyonce and Kelly said. "We're really looking forward to the next phase of Destiny's Child."

And in true child of destiny fashion, former band members La Tavia and Le Toya place yesterday behind them, seek pleasure in today and embrace tomorrow's promise of better things to come. Future plans for the duo include recording a new album together, developing a fitness video scheduled for an August release and putting the finishing touches on their www.latavia-letoya.com website.