## MOVIES

# 'To Die For' a biting black comedy



Gus Van Sant is the bost bad director around. Most filmmskers would follow a stinker like would follow a stinker lither "Even Cowgirla Get the Blues" with something more commer-cial, more Holly-wood-friendly, Not Van Bant-He makes "To

MONAGAM

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Die For."

Nicole Kidman plays a leggy
Ty weatherwoman whose desire
to make it in the big time leads to
the munder of her husband. Wellacted and highly caustic, it's one
of the most flawed and fascinating movies of the year.

The story is loosely based on
the much-publicized case a few
years ago of a woman who
seduced some high school boys
into doing the deed. Van Bant recognizes this as TV movie fodder
so plays it for the darkest kind of
comedy imaginable.

Suzanne Stone has one goal in
life: to follow in the footsteps of
idole Connie Chung and Jano
Pauley, Dressed for success in
short skirts and brightly colored
between the story of the control
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hand (Mett Dillon), whose family owns an Italian bar and restaurant.

Her story is framed by interviews with the major players, from Stone's parents and in-laws to the murderess herself, who rationalizes everything but (much to the chagrin of police) never admits that she has done anything wrong. The boy who actually pulled the trigger tells his story in prison blues.

These scarces remind me of a "Current Affair" interview I caught with the real-life gunman, now serving a life sentence and still harboring the pathetic thought that the older woman who put him up to it really loves him. You laugh at these kids because they're such losers but also feel terrible at how they are so wan jupited.

Van Sent has recruited his own telented ensemble. Buck Henry, who appears on screen as a high school teacher, also wrote the script. Danny Elfman brings the right blend of fun and foreboding to his musical score. Even cult director David Cronenberg shows up in a key scene near the end.

Perhaps the neatest trick in "To Die For" is how sery it all is, yet with surprisingly little mudity. Dressed in a seemingly limitiess and billarious wardrobe, Mrs. Tom Cruise has the kind of effortless sexuality that the other Stone (for

less sexuality that the other Stone (Sharon) would do her own dying

ashe proves that she has the looks to snag some wealthy television executive?

The end of the film is also muddled since Van Sant, who obviously has an aversion to dry courtroom scenes, expects us to fill in too many gaps as to how Stone beat the murder rep.

Van Sant (who made the similarly maddening "My Own Private Idaho") gives tu one wink too many in showing us how sarcastic and clover this whole exercise is. "To Dis For" lan't the first dark comely to lambaste the evil of the television mindest, and, despite some clover



To leave a message for John Monaghan, dial 953-2047, mail-box number 1866, on a touch-tone

were dating, Dillon) knew Suzanne (Nicole Kidman) was the going to mar-ry in "To Die For."

phone, fax him a note at 591-7279, or write him in care of Entertain-ment, Observer & Eccentric News-papers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

"'AMERICAN QUILT' IS ONE OF THE BEST MOVIES IN YEARS."

"WONDERFUL AND JOYOUS. DO YOURSELF A FAVOR AND GO!"



Winona Anne Ellen Kate Alfre RYDER BANCROFT BURSTYN NELLIGAN WOODARD

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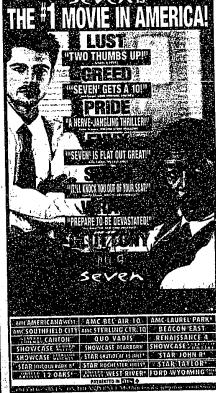
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