MOVIES

'Big Hit' fails to make its mark as action-comedy



I was embarrassed sitting
through most of
"The Big Hit,"
the same way I
am watching
"Saturday Night
Live." You see
talented people
out there working, but the
writing is so
insipid, the
direction so

JOHN MONAGHAN

MONAGIMA insipid, the MONAGIMA direction so uninspired that they're left floundering while the audience scratches its collective head. Here, at least, we can assume that something got lost in thranslation. Director Kirk Wong wants "The Big Hit" to mix the

cinema with Tarantino-style black comedy. What he delivers instead is a cross botween the similarly misguided "Grosse Pointe Blank" and "Six Heads in

Pointe Blank' and "Six Heads in a Duffel Bag."
There is hope early on. Mark Wahlberg is one in a quartet of professional killers who dispense with countless bodyguards en route to their latest victim. Then, in a great twist on the heroestrunning-from-the-encroaching-wall-of-flame shot in most action movies. Wahlberg escapes the fireball by leaping from a 20-story window.
For the next 90 minutes. "The

story window.

For the next 90 minutes, "The Big Hit" does its own downward spiral as partner-in-crime Lou Dinmond Phillips coerces

Wahlberg to take part in kidnapping a billionaire's daughter. Little do they know that the girl is the goddaughter of their boss, who wants the kidnappers to pay with their lives.

Meanwhile, Wahlberg attempts to impress his girl-friend's visiting parents (Elliott Gould and Lanine Kazan) who don't approve of the boy because he's not Jowish. As he prepares a kosher meal, he also has to hide the evidence of his misdeeds, including the feisty kidnapping victim and a trash bag full of body parts from an earlier assignment. You'll be reminded of "Grosse Pointe Blank" in the shootout in the kitchen as the prospective in laws run for cover. It makes that

movie look clever in comparison.
Wahlberg, who has proven himself a viable actor in movies like "Boogle Nights" and "The Baskethall Diaries," doesn't have the moxie to pull off both the comedy and the mayhem. His vulnerability seems forced, all his lines delivered in that whiny, nearly whispered Brooklyn accent.
Over-the-top, meanwhile, is required for Diamond Phillips, Unfortunately, the actor still best known for "La Bambahas little flair for this brand of comedy.

has little flair for this brand of comedy. Elliott Gould farce worso as anasty drunk who engages in the movie's lowest comedy when he throws up on Diamond Phillips in the action/slapstick climax. Then again, Im thinking back on my favorite Hong Kong action movies and realizing how stupid they are too. Yet somehow the humor is easier to swallow, even (or maybe especially) with the badly translated subtitles and dubbing. dubbing. There's a funny movie here

SCREEN SCENE

A sampling of what's playing at alternative movie theaters across metro Detroil as reviewed by John Monaghan.

Detroil Film Theatre—Detroil institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward, Detroil. Call (313) 383-2823 for information (85.50; \$4.50 students/seniors) "Village of Dreams" (Japan-1996). Friday-Sunday, May 1-3 (call for showtimes). Identical twin brothers—both celebrated artists—reflect on their vibrant and mysterious childhoods in the 1940s as they collaborate on a memoir. "36th Ann Arbor Film Festi-



Action thriller: Pam (Christina Applegate) and Mel (Mark Wahlberg) discuss their engagement with Pam's disapproving parents, Jeanne and Mort Schulman (Lainie Kazan and Elliott Gould) in "The Big Hit."

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somewhere. Unfortunately, neither director Wong the previously made the routine "Crime Story" with Jackie Chan) or his cast know how to pull it off. Big hit? There's something this

ward, Fernulaie. Call (248) 5443030 for information.

A Confidential" (USA 1998) 930 pm. Thursday, April
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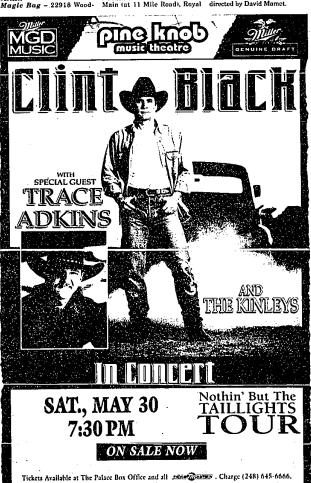
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Oak. Call (248) 542-0180 for information. (\$5.50; \$4 students/seniors and matinees; \$3 wilght)
"Butcher Boy" (Ireland 1998). The movies of Neal Jordan ("Interview with the Vampire" and "The Crying Game") leave me as fascinated as they do cold. Expect the same here as social and emotional forces turn a young boy into a killer.

social and emotional forces turn a young boy into a killer.

"The Big One" (USA 1998). The latest from Fint boy-madegood Michael Moore 'Roger and Me's shot during his recent book tour. Along the way he confinuts corporations who continue to downsize to the detriment of employees everywhere.

"The Spanish Prisoner" (USA 1998). Campbell Scott plays a young businessman who develops a dangerous relationship with a mysterious tycoon (Steve Martin). Written and directed by David Mamet.



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