

MOVIES

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



JOHN MONAGHAN

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 uninspired that they're left floundering while the audience scratches its collective head.

Here, at least, we can assume that something got lost in the translation. Director Kirk Wong wants "The Big Hit" to mix the

high-octane action of Hong Kong cinema with Tarantino-style black comedy. What he delivers instead is a cross between the similarly misguided "Grosse Pointe Blank" and "Six Hands in a Duffel Bag."

There is hope early on. Mark Wahlberg is one in a quartet of professional killers who dispose of countless bodyguards en route to their latest victim. Then, in a great twist on the heroes-running-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 Big Hit" does its own downward spiral as partner-in-crime Lou Diamond 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 girlfriends' visiting parents (Elliott Gould and Lainie Kazan) who don't approve of the boy because he's not Jewish. 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 "Boogie Nights" and "The Basketball 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 and he's more than happy to oblige. Unfortunately, the actor still best known for "La Bamba" has little flair for this brand of comedy.

Elliott Gould fares worse as a nasty drunk who engages in the movie's lowest comedy when he throws up on Diamond Phillips in the action/slapstick climax.

Then again, I'm 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 if it's especially with the badly translated subtitles and dubbing.

There's a funny movie here



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."

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 movie doesn't deserve to be.

John Monaghan welcomes your calls and comments. To leave John a voice mail message, dial (734) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, mailbox 1866.

GUIDE TO THE MOVIES

General Cinemas Bargain movies daily plus \$1.25 (low-key show day) Contino's Ford Rd. 1111 and 11275-981-1900 Advanced same-day tickets available "Recess" 12 re-run Friday thru Thursday LOST IN SPACE (PG-13) CREASE (PG-13) MAJOR LEAGUE 3 (PG-13) SCREAM 2 (R) "THE ODD COUPLE" (PG-13) "OBJECT OF MY AFFECTION" (R) CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES	Showtimes Pontiac 1.5 Telegraph Rd. Lake Rd. W. Side of Telegraph 810-333-2241 Bargain Movies Daily All Show Until 6 pm Continuous Show Daily BIG HIT (R) MAJOR LEAGUE 3 (PG-13) SPECIES 2 (R) PLAYER'S CLUB (R) LOST IN SPACE (PG-13) CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES	Star Rochester Hills 200 Early Circle 825-2300 No one under age 6 admitted for PG-13 & rated films after 6 pm NO THE BIG HIT (R) NO OBJECT OF MY AFFECTION (R) CITY OF ANGELS (PG-13) LOST IN SPACE (PG-13) MAJOR LEAGUE 3 (PG-13) SPECIES 2 (R) PLAYER'S CLUB (R) LOST IN SPACE (PG-13) CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES	THE WEDDING SINGER (PG-13) RV CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES	5125 (THU) SHOWS DAILY NP SCREAM 2 (R) NP TARZAN AND THE LOST CITY (PG) NP PAULIE (PG) NP OBJECT OF MY AFFECTION (R) NP MAJOR LEAGUE BACK TO THE MONK (PG-13) CITY OF ANGELS (PG-13) ODD COUPLE 2 (PG-13) SPECIES 2 (R) BARNET'S GREAT ADVENTURE (C) MERUQUY BISHOP (R) LOST IN SPACE (PG-13) TITANIC (PG-13) CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES
North Town Center 8 North Rd. South of I-96 344-0077 Advance same-day tickets available "Recess" 12 re-run "Recess" 12 re-run "OBJECT OF MY AFFECTION" (R) "MAJOR LEAGUE 3" (PG-13) "SPECIES 2" (R) "LOST IN SPACE" (PG-13) "TITANIC" (PG-13) "THE ODD COUPLE" (PG-13) "OBJECT OF MY AFFECTION" (R) CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES	Showtimes Pontiac 6.12 2405 Telegraph Rd. East side of Telegraph 810-334-6777 Bargain Movies Daily All Show Until 6 pm Continuous Show Daily LOST IN SPACE (PG-13) TARZAN (PG) SCREAM 2 (R) OBJECT OF MY AFFECTION (R) PAULIE (PG) CITY OF ANGELS (PG-13) TITANIC (PG-13) LOST IN SPACE (PG-13) CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES	Star Southfield 12 Mile between Telegraph and Northwestern, Off-456 248-333-STAR No one under age 6 admitted for PG-13 & rated films after 6 pm NO THE BIG HIT (R) NO TARZAN AND THE LOST CITY (PG) NO TWO GUNS AND A GUY (R) NO SLIDING DOORS (R) NO OBJECT OF MY AFFECTION (R) NO MAJOR LEAGUE BACK TO THE MONK (PG-13) NO PAULIE (PG) CITY OF ANGELS (PG-13) THE ODD COUPLE 2 (PG-13) LOST IN SPACE (PG-13) BARNET'S GREAT ADVENTURE (C) TITANIC (PG-13) CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES	United Artists West River 9 Mile 2 Block West of 4660 West 248-788-6572 SCREAM 2 (R) NV THE BIG HIT (R) NV TARZAN AND THE LOST CITY (PG) PAULIE (PG) NV OBJECT OF MY AFFECTION (R) NV CITY OF ANGELS (PG-13) NV LOST IN SPACE (PG-13) NV TITANIC (PG-13) NV MAJOR LEAGUE III (PG-13) NV MERUQUY BISHOP (R) NV CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES	Intertec Cinema 30400 Plymouth Rd. 313-261-3330 All shows 11 except show after 6 pm All shows 11:50 11:50 every Tuesday Would you like to see "Recess"? Then become a "RECESS" MEMBER! Come in and find out how! SUN-THURS Box office opens at 4:00 pm Monday - Friday only CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES
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National Amusements Showtimes Cinemas Showtimes Ashmun Hill 1.4 2150 N. Oakfield Rd. Between University & Valiant Blvd 810-373-2660 Bargain Movies Daily All Show until 6 pm Continuous Show Daily Late Show Wed. Thurs. Fri. & Sat. THE BIG HIT (R) SCREAM 2 (R) TARZAN (PG) OBJECT OF MY AFFECTION (R) PAULIE (PG) MAJOR LEAGUE 3 (PG-13) ODD COUPLE 2 (PG-13) SPECIES 2 (R) CITY OF ANGELS (PG-13) PLAYER'S CLUB (R) LOST IN SPACE (PG-13) MERUQUY BISHOP (R) BARNET (C) AS GOOD AS IT GETS (PG-13) TITANIC (PG-13) CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES	Showtimes Westland 1.8 6000 Wayne Rd. One block S. of Wayne Rd. 313-722-1060 Bargain Movies Daily All Show Until 6 pm Continuous Show Daily Late Show Wed. Thurs. Fri. & Sat. THE BIG HIT (R) SCREAM 2 (R) TARZAN (PG) OBJECT OF MY AFFECTION (R) PAULIE (PG) ODD COUPLE (PG-13) CITY OF ANGELS (PG-13) LOST IN SPACE (PG-13) TITANIC (PG-13) CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES	Star John 8 3122 John R. Road 810-545-2070 No one under 6 admitted for PG-13 & rated films after 6 pm NP SLIDING DOORS (R) NP TWO GUNS AND A GUY (R) NP MAJOR LEAGUE 3: BACK TO THE MONK (PG-13) NP THE OBJECT OF MY AFFECTION (R) NP PAULIE (PG) NP MY GANT (PG) LOST IN SPACE (PG-13) BARNET'S GREAT ADVENTURE (C) PRIORITY COLORED (R) GOOD WILL HUNTING (R) TITANIC (PG-13) CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES	United Artists Oakland Inside Oakland Mall 248-988-0766 THE BIG HIT (R) NV THE ODD COUPLE (PG-13) SPECIES 2 (R) NV AS GOOD AS IT GETS (PG-13) THE PLAYER'S CLUB (R) NV LOVE YOU DON'T TOUCH ME (R) NV CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES	Waterford Cinema II 7501 Highland Rd. S.E. corner of 25 & Highland Lake Rd. 24 Hour Movie Loop (248) 646-7800 CALL 77 FRIDAY 1998! Stadium Seating and Digital Sound Makes for the Best Movie Experience in Oakland County CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

SCREEN SCENE

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

Detroit Film Theatre
2000 Woodward, Detroit. Call (313) 833-2323 for information (\$5.50; \$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.

30th Ann Arbor Film Festival
"Tour." 7:30 p.m. Monday, May 4. The Festival - the oldest showcase for 16mm in the country - makes its annual stop in Detroit. Expect lots of experimentation in the 200 minutes of prize-winners and audience favorites.

Magic Bag - 22918 Woodward, Ferndale. Call (248) 544-3030 for information.

"L.A. Confidential" (USA - 1998). 9:30 p.m. Thursday, April 30. A trio of police detectives in the 1950s deal with corruption in their own way in this dense thriller based on a novel by James Ellroy. The performances are uniformly good, but Kevin Spacey stands out as a celebrity cop tied in with both a "Dragon" style TV show and the tabloids. (\$2)

"General Chaos: Uncensored Animation" 8 p.m. and 10:15 p.m. Friday-Saturday, May 1-2. A compilation of adults-only cartoons shorts. On the program: Bill Plympton's "Sex and Violence," a coffee house satire called "Espresso Depresso" and Tony Nicolli's "Junky," about a parrot with a nasty cracker addiction. (\$5)

Main Art Theatre - 118 N. Main at 11 Mile Road, Royal Oak. Call (248) 542-0180 for information. (\$6.50; \$4 students/seniors and matinees; \$3 twilight)

"Butcher Boy" (Ireland - 1998). The movie of Neil 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.

"The Big One" (USA - 1998). The latest from Flint boy-made-good Michael Moore ("Roger and Me") shot during his recent book tour. Along with he confronts 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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