Adam Sandler grows up with 'Big Daddy'

"I know, I know," Adam Sandler might have said to his agent around a year age, "the dopey characters sell. But the critics say I can't act because I crities say I can't act because I haven't done anything with pathos. Hey, I can do pathos. Get me somethin' with pathos. Then get me a dictionary."

So at 32, Sandler may be all through with "Waterboy" roles, opting for grownup parts like "Big Daddy." Big mistake.

Once the word goes out that Sonny Koufax (Sandler's charac-

ter) is just this nice, regular guy with a few problems — promising law career on hold, dumped by his girl, dissed by his dad, cclipsed by his college buddies — you can expect Sandler to go back to the well for another dose of dopiness.

Meanwhile, "Big Daddy" gives us a kinder, gentler Adam without discarding the wise guy New Yorkerisms. Koufax finds himself the dumpee in a doomed relationship with girlfriend Vanessa (Kristy Swenson) and adopts a five-year-old boy to prove he's ready for real responsibility.

When the plan backfires —
she takes up with some old guy
anyway — he tries to return the
kid like an uncepend CD. Having second thoughts, he convinces Social Services to let him
keep young Julian until a foster
family can be found. How much
trouble could one kid be?

Act II is the film's best segment, in which Sonny's parental
baptism by fire includes coping
with bedwetting, racing to
McDonald's before they switch
menus from breakfast to lunch,
fighting over the TV and yet
even more bladder problems
("Only you and my grandfather

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go every 30 seconds.")

Naturally, the two become inseparable despite a court order to the contrary. Elements of Jim Carrey's "Liar Liar" and Tim Allen's "The Santa Clause creep in at this point, as Sonny dusts off his law degree and fights for custody.

First-time screenwriter Steve Franks turned over his draft to Sandler who, with partner Tim Herlihy, added pieces of business from their own childhood like Julian's attachment to a favorite toy. They also scripted some scene-stealing supporting characters, from an omnipresent

There are big laughs in "Big Daddy," but parents will note that most of them feature body parts or functions, injurious slapstick (tossing a branch in the path of a Rollerblader) or smort aleck East Coast comebacks. Your own child is not likely to respect you more after seeing it unless you, like Sonny, can also teach him/her to expel a six-foot string of drool.

"Big Daddy" aims more for the heart than the funny bone, and might have hit closer to its mark if Sonny didn't go through the whole film looking and sounding like he just woke up. He sports a bad stubble even for his big first date with his roommate's finnce's sister Layla (Joey Lauren Adams).

So is Sandler, like Sonny, So is Sandier, like Sonny, ready to take on some real responsibility? And is that what we want from our Waterbuy? The public, as it should, will be the judge and jury.

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COMING ATTRACTIONS

Scheduled to open Friday, July 9

AMENICAN PIE
Coming-of-age comedy about a group of high school seniors who lose their virginity by prom light, Stars Eugene LEvy, Natasha Lyonne, Alyson Hannigen. Scheduled to open Friday, July 16

Story of Jealousy and sexual obsession. Stars Tom Cruise, Nicole Kidman.

Stars Tom Cruise, Nicole Kidman.

"LAKE PLACID"

A scientist, a game warden, a sheriif
and an eccentric mythology professor
converge near a remote lake in Maine
to investigate a gruesome fatality. Thois
dventure, laced with humor and terror,
leads to a shocking secret beneath the
anything but plocid waters. Stars Bridget Fonda, Bill Pullman, Oliver Platt.

"THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT" Herror film about three college stu-dents, who in 1994 hired into Mary-land's Black Hills Forest to shoot a umentary about a local legend, and were never heard from again. Stars Heather Donahue, Joshua Leonard.

"THE WOOD"
Cornedy of three childhood friends reminiscing about years gone by the even of their friend's wedding. Stars Orner Epps, Toye Diggs, Richard T. Jones.

"DROP DEAD GORGLOUS"
Comedy about a small town's obsessio with its teenage beauty contest. Stars Kirstle Alley, Ellen Barkin, Kirsten Dunst.

Scheduled to open Eriday, July 23

"TWICE UPON A YESTERDAY" Exclusively at the Landmark Meple Exclusively at the Landmark Meple Theatre. A fortorn lover in London gets the chance of a lifetime to turn back the clock and relive a relationship that went wrong with a previous girlfriend. Stars Douglas Henshall.

Stars Douglas Henshull.

Scheduled to owne Fidely, July 30

PEEP BLIE SEA

Group of researchers working on a cure
for cancer using meterials from genetically enhanced sharins becomes strondd on a damaged and sinking marine
research feelilly. Thore, they are menaced by the stanks they have created,
which now surround them with deadly
intent. Stars Samuel Jackson. "OUTSIDE PROVIDENCE"

Schadule to open Friday, Aug. 6

Schaule to open Friday, Aug. 6
FRAIT CLUB:
Tale of a man who sets up a fights in which young men are paired off in bloody, no-holds barred bouts that continue until one drops. Stare Brad Pit.

THE IRON GATE*
A glant metal mechine falls to Earth in 1958 and frightens the residents of a small town in Maine, until it befriends a 9-year-old boy named Hogarth. Animated feature.

"WHITE BOYS"
Funny, honest and searing look at white wannebe gargstes in the heartland and at America's youth struggling-to—in their place in a multicultural soci-, ety.

Scheduled to open Wednesday, Aug. 11
"IN TOO DEED"

A police detective goes deep undercover to get a notorious gengster. But in his quest, he risks losing himself. Stats Omar Epps.

**PEXT TO YOU*
A teenage girl and boy who have grown up next door to one another have never made a love connection. But when long-time friends and neighbors gather for their high school's cententalic celebration, they realize they were meant for each other all along. Stars Melissa Joan Hurt and Stephen Coilins.

Scheduled to open Filday, Aug. 13

BROKEDOWN PALACE
Two high school girls set off on a dream tup to Thalland following their graduation. The dream turns to a neightmarria. The dream turns to a neightmarria. The dream turns to a neightmarria. The graduation and their set of th

Scheduled to open Friday, Aug. 20

"MICKEY SLUE EYES"
Romantic comedy about an English art dealer in New York who falls in love with the daughter of a Mafis boss. T





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