

# Streisand comes up with a moving 'Prince of Tides'

Sometimes since the last '48 hours," Nick Nolte has learned how to really act. In "Cape Fear," he shed his grizzly bear voice and mannerisms to play a civilized lawyer in a primal battle with psycho Robert DeNiro.

And now, in this month's "The Prince of Tides," he explores a character in ways that would have never seemed possible. The early word on the actors, especially Barbara Streisand as the female lead, seemed like the worst case of miscasting since "Boonfire of the Vanities."

The good news here is that "Prince of Tides," despite an overdose of schmaltz in the last reel, is a quality treatment of Pat Conroy's popular novel.

As in other Conroy stories, this one is partially set in the South. It follows unemployed school teacher and fat odyssey back to the world of feeling humans. Years of repressed emotion have closed him off from his wife (Blythe Danner), who is quickly losing her seemingly infinite patience.

When Tom's sister Savannah attempts her third suicide, he flies out to New York to be with her. The request comes from psychiatrist Susan Lowenstein (Streisand), who needs Tom to supply missing information about his sister's past.

IN THE WINGO family, Tom has served as its memory, its touch with reality. Mom deals with pain by simply sweeping it under the rug, pre-

tickets please  
**John Monaghan**

tending that it didn't happen. Brother Luke went wild and was killed for it. Savannah, a poet, tries so hard to forget who she is that she adopts a pen name and a new persona.

The problems of the family are capitalized in an emotional and well-done montage at the beginning of the film which spells out the basic relationships.

"I'm not sure when my parents began their battle," Tom recalls in voice over, "but one thing was for certain, the only prisoners of war were their children."

"The Prince of Tides" covers a lot of material in a little over two hours, introducing just enough of the minor characters while keeping Tom as its focus.

Visually, it has that nostalgic quality where every image, both inside and out, seems to be washed in sepia tones. Streisand, who also directed the film, isn't all that interested in physical reality here.

And maybe she shouldn't be. The emotional impact is what counts and it works right up until the climactic sex scenes, where Tom and Susan undergo their romantic healing pro-

cess. It might as well be a perfume commercial, with the sappiest, lushest, syrupiest movie music imaginably backing it all up.

AFTER SEVERAL nights in the sack, the film hasn't truly traveled down the familiar roads of "The Way We Were." Nolte, in his transformation from gravelly voiced chain smoker to sensitive family man, actually looks a little like Robert Redford.

Compared to Nolte, Streisand is pretty mono-dimensional as the psychiatrist. She's cast some strong women in supporting roles, however, including the ever-compelling Blythe Danner as Tom's estranged wife. Not surprisingly, she never plays in scenes with any of these other strong women.

It can be argued that "Prince of Tides" was made by Streisand simply to make her look as attractive as possible. Much of it seems calculated to elicit responses from the audience about how good she looks — really better than 20 years ago. Fortunately, the basic story here is such a moving and memorable one that even this is easy to overlook.



High school teacher Tom Wingo (Nick Nolte) together by a crisis involving Wingo's twin sister and psychiatrist Susan Lowenstein (Barbara Streisand) fall in love when they are brought to the Prince of Tides.

## SCREEN SCENE

**HENRY FORD CENTENNIAL LIBRARY**, 16301 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. Call 943-2037 for more information. (Fres)

"A Christmas Carol" (Britain — 1951), 7 p.m. Dec. 23. The best film version of Dickens' classic yuletide tale stars Alastair Sim as the miser Scrooge, whose life is changed irrevocably after visits from a trio of ghosts.

**JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER**, Jimmy Frenlis Morris Building, 10 Mile Road, Oak Park. Call 987-4030 for more information. (Fres)

"The Music Man" (USA — 1962), 1 p.m. Dec. 25. Robert Preston reprises his Broadway performance as Professor Harold Hill, a trickster who persuades a small Iowa town to start a boy's band — with him handling the expenses. With Shirley Jones, Buddy Hackett and Ronny Howard.

**MAGIC BAG THEATRE CALE**, 22918 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. Call 544-3030 for information. (43)

"A Threat to Society," 7, 9:30 and 11:30 p.m. Dec. 26. Chris Gore, editor of Film Threat magazine, is home for the holidays from California. He's brought with him some off-the-wall movies on film and large screen video, including a late-night screening of the film "Nekromantik," definitely not for the squeamish.

"The Commitments" (Ireland — 1991), 4:30, 7 and 9:30 p.m. Dec. 27-29, 4:30, 7 p.m. Dec. 29, and 7 and 9:30 p.m. Dec. 30. Alan Parker's highly entertaining look at a group of young musicians who form Ireland's first blue-eyed soul band. Full of superb covers of classics from Aretha Franklin, Otis Redding and James Brown.

**MICHIGAN THEATRE**, 603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Call 668-8397 for information. (\$5; \$4.25 students and senior citizens)

"Prospero's Books" (Britain/France — 1991), through Dec. 31 (call for show times). Peter Green-

way, the controversial director of "The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover," reworks Shakespeare's "The Tempest" with John Gielgud interpreting most of the parts. Visually, it's a stunner. It's also a real snooter, if you're not in the mood.

"Madame Bovary" (France — 1991), through Dec. 31 (call for show times). Gustave Flaubert's novel about Emma Bovary, whose longings for romance result in several lustful flings and luxury spending on borrowed money.

**REDFORD THEATRE**, 17360 Lahser, Detroit. Call 537-1133 for more information. (\$2.50)

"The Glenn Miller Story" (USA — 1954), 8 p.m. Dec. 27-28 (organ overture begins at 7:30 p.m.) James Stewart plays the big band leader in this musical biography directed by Anthony Mann.

**STATE WAYNE THEATRE**, 35310 Michigan Ave. West, Wayne. Call 326-4600 for show times. (\$2; \$1 children and senior citizens)

Double feature — "It's a Wonderful Life" (USA — 1946) and "Bells of St. Mary's" (USA — 1945). In everyone's favorite Christmas movie, James Stewart stars as a man who considers himself a failure until an angel appears and shows him how messed up his town would be without him. Followed by "Bells," the follow-up to the popular "Going My Way," again starring Bing Crosby as Father O'Malley.

Children's Matinees — "All Dogs Go to Heaven" (USA — 1989) and "Doctor Doolittle" (USA — 1967). The cartoon is all right, but "Doolittle" is the kind of movie mistake that new generations shouldn't have to be subjected to. Go see "Beauty and the Beast" instead.

— John Monaghan

Billy (Dick Massey) tries out a drum set in the window of a pawn shop in Alan Parker's "The Commitments," playing at the Magic Bag Theatre Cafe in Ferndale.

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