MOVIES

Stanley Tucci's 'Big Night' worth the effort

TICKETS PLEASE

JOHN MONAGHAN

"Big Night" is a little film with some grand ideas. On the surface a simple story about a struggling Italian restaurant on the Jersey Shore in the 1950s, it also speaks to the difference between pandering to the masses and creating something that you are truly proud of.

For brothers Primo and Secondo (played by Tony Shalhoub and co-director Stanley Tucci) these philosophies get argued daily. Primo, the eldest, does most of the cooking. He refuses to serve the spaghetti and meatballs that packs them in at the restaurant across town. Secondo, who serves as manager, would like to pay some bills.

A cross-town rival (Ian Holm), recognizing Primo's brilliance in the kitchen, throws the brothers a bone. Popular band leader Louis Prima will be in town soon, looking for some place to eat after his set. The way Secondo sees it, the notoriety (not to mention the autographed picture on the wall) will be just the endorsement they need to get the restaurant rolling.

Much of "Big Night" involves the preparation of the authentic Italian dishes, works of culinary art that require time, patience, and the freshest ingredients. As Primo prepares the banquet, his brother hand picks a guest list and spruces up the place, using up all of the restaurant's remaining capital.

"Big Night" is the first feature from Stanley Tucci, best known for an ongoing role on television's "Murder One." He and friend Campbell Scott ("Mrs. Parker and the Vicious Circle") share the directing credits, with Scott appearing in a cameo as a high-pressure Cadillac salesman who gets invited to the soiree.

While the Caddie as symbol of the American dream is hardly a new concept, the movie does offer some unique touches. The evocative restaurant, a study in muted colors and imported oil paintings, speaks of simple elegance, a far cry from the garish red checkered table clothes in the rival restaurant, where a chubby soprano sings "O Solo Mio."

Look for some surprises in the cast as well, starting with Tucci as the suavely dressed Secondo, the personable and far more culturally acclimated of the brothers. Shalhoub successfully plays a man uncomfortable outside of the kitchen or his white chef's uniform. He stammers in his attempts to court a pretty flower shop owner.

And while Isabella Rosellini seems right at home as a restaurant hostess, her husband (played by English actor Holm) is in the wrong business. A far cry from the squat, eccentric Englishman he has played for the past two decades, the performance should be seen less as a career move than a curious experiment. Why Holm with so many authentic Italian-American actors around?

Only rarely does "Big Night" indulge in typical first-time director flourishes. In one scene, Secondo's discussion in Holm's office is blocked by a large lamp that bisects the center of the screen. Is this foreshadowing the fact that their conversation will get Secondo nowhere? Or did it just look good at the time?

Made for around $4 million, "Big Night" looks to have cost twice as much, thanks to dreamy retro locales and evocative cinematography by Ken Kelsch. Even when the story drags, you can tell that for Tucci, this is a heartfelt labor of love.

John Monaghan welcomes your calls and comments. To leave him a voice mail message, dial (313) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, mailbox 1866.

JOHN CLIFFORD

Heartwarming story: *Tony Shalhoub offers Allison Janney a sample of one of his culinary delights in "Big Night," the story of two brothers attempting to save their failing restaurant business.*

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Scheduled to open Friday, Sept. 27

"THE LEOPARD SON"

Exclusively at the Star John R. Filmed in Tanzania, this documentary traces the path of a young leopard on his journey to adulthood.

"2 DAYS IN THE VALLEY"

An all star cast star in this story about a bizarre murder and the ten eccentric characters wrapped up in the plot. Stars Danny Aiello, Teri Hatcher, Jeff Daniels.

"ED'S NEXT MOVE"

Exclusively in Ann Arbor. A fresh romantic comedy about a Wisconsin native who lands a job in New York and learns to endure the trials and tribulations as well as the surprising rewards that life in that city can provide.

"EXTREME MEASURES"

A medical thriller about a doctor who stumbles onto a private research program that has an unthinkable truth at its core. Stars Hugh Grant, Gene Hackman, Sarah Jessica Parker.

Scheduled to open Friday, Oct. 4

"GIANT"

Exclusively at the Main Art Theatre. The 40th anniversary re-release of the dramatic saga about life and love through two generations of cattle ranchers in Texas. Stars Rock Hudson, Elizabeth Taylor and James Dean.

"BOUND"

Suspense thriller about two women who scheme to swindle the mob out of $2 million. Stars Jennifer Tilly.

"THE MIGHTY DUCKS 3"

This third installment has those "Ducks" trying to adjust to their new school and its accompanying circumstances. Stars Emilio Estevez.

OBSERVER & ECCENTRIC GUIDE TO THE MOVIES

AMC Theatres
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DRAGONHEART (PG13)
TRUTH ABOUT CATS & DOGS (PG13)
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AMC Abbey 8
14 Mile at I-75 588-0881
No children under 6 after 6 pm except (G) and (PG) rated movies
NP KINGPIN (PG13)
NP ADVENTURES OF PINOCCHIO (G)
NP JOE'S APARTMENT (PG13)
SUPERCOP (R)
MULTIPLICITY (PG13)
THE FRIGHTENERS (R)
THE ROCK (R)
TWISTER (PG13)
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AMC Americana West 6
Orchard Lake Rd. S. of 15 Mi.
855-4200
No children under 6 after 6 PM and (G) and (PG) rated movies
NP FLED (R)
NUTTY PROFESSOR (PG13)
NP THE FRIGHTENERS (R)
NP PINOCCHIO (G)
INDEPENDENCE DAY (PG13)
NP KAZAAM (PG)
NP KINGPIN (PG13)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

AMC Maple 3
W. Maple West of Telegraph
855-9090
No children under 6 after 6 PM
A TIME TO KILL (R)
MULTIPLICITY (PG13)
PHENOMENON (PG)
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AMC Old Orchard
Orchard Lk. Rd. N of I-696-12 Mile
553-9965
No children under 6 after 6 pm
COURAGE UNDER FIRE (R)
THE ROCK (R)
SUPERCOP (R)
JOE'S APARTMENT (PG13)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

AMC Wonderland 6
Wonderland Mall behind Target
261-8100
No children under 6 after 6 PM except (PG) and (G) rated movies
NP KAZAAM (PG)
SUPERCOP (R)
NP FLED (R)
COURAGE UNDER FIRE (R)
NP THE FRIGHTENERS (R)
NP JOE'S APARTMENT (PG13)
PHENOMENON (PG)
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AMC Laurel Park 10
6 Mile between Newburgh & I-275
[illegible]
No children under 6 after 6 PM except (G) and (PG) rated movies
[illegible] (PG13)
[illegible] (PG13)
[illegible] (PG13)
[illegible]
A TIME TO KILL (R)
ID 4 (PG13)
PHENOMENON (PG)
FRIGHTENERS (R)
COURAGE UNDER FIRE (R)
JOE'S APARTMENT (PG13)
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AMC Southfield City 12
Greenfield at 9 Mile
(810) 559-2730
No children under 6 after 6 PM except (G) and (PG) rated movies.
NP SUPERCOP (R)
COURAGE UNDER FIRE (R)
NUTTY PROFESSOR (PG13)
NP PINOCCHIO (G)
NP KINGPIN (PG13)
ID 4 (PG13)
MULTIPLICITY (PG13)
KAZAAM (PG)
FLED (R)
FRIGHTENERS (R)
A TIME TO KILL (R)
NP JOE'S APARTMENT (PG13)
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General Cinemas
Bargain matinee daily plus $3.25 (Twi-Lite) show daily

Canton 6
Ford Rd., 1 Mi. west of I-275
981-1900
Advanced same-day tickets available
Friday thru Thursday
VERY BRADY SEQUEL (PG13)
TIN CUP (R)
LAST MAN STANDING (R)
FIRST KID (PG)
FLY AWAY HOME (PG)
FIRST WIVES CLUB (PG)
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Novi Town Center 8
Novi Rd. South of I-96 344-0077
Advance same-day tickets available
FRIDAY THRU THURSDAY
*DENOTES FRI & SAT. TIMES ONLY
TIME TO KILL (R)
FEELING MINNESOTA (R)
SHE'S THE ONE (R)
FIRST KID (PG)
LAST MAN STANDING (R)
TIN CUP (R)
BOGUS (PG)
BULLETPROOF (R)
MAXIMUM RISK (R)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

Keego Twin Cinema
Orchard Lake Rd. at Cass Lake Rd.
682-1900
All Seats $1.50 before 6 pm
Family Matinee FRI-SAT-SUN
MULTIPLICITY (PG13)
NUTTY PROFESSOR (PG)
STRIPTEASE (R)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

National Amusements Showcase Cinemas

Showcase Auburn Hills 1-14
2150 N. Opdyke Rd.
Between University & Walton Blvd
810-373-2660
Bargain Matinees Daily.
All Shows until 6 pm
Continuous Shows Daily
*Late Shows Wed. Thurs. Fri. Sat.
FIRST WIVES CLUB (PG)
LAST MAN STANDING (R)
FLY AWAY HOME (PG)
MAXIMUM RISK (R)
RICH MAN'S WIFE (R)
FEELING MINNESOTA (R)
BULLETPROOF (R)
SPITFIRE GRILL (PG13)
FIRST KID (PG)
ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU (PG13)
TIN CUP (R)
A TIME TO KILL (R)
INDEPENDENCE DAY (PG13)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

Showcase Dearborn 1-8
Michigan & Telegraph
[illegible]
Bargain Matinees Daily.
All Shows until 6 pm.
Continuous Shows Daily
*Late Shows Fri. & Sat. & Sun.
LAST MAN STANDING (R)
RICH MAN'S WIFE (R)
MAXIMUM RISK (R)
FEELING MINNESOTA (R)
BULLETPROOF (R)
FIRST KID (PG)
ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU (PG13)
TIN CUP (R)
A TIME TO KILL (R)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

Showcase Pontiac 1-5
Telegraph Sq. Lake Rd. W Side of Telegraph
810-332-0241
Bargain Matinees Daily
• All Shows Until 6 pm
Continuous Shows Daily • Late *Shows Fri. & Sat. & Sun.
LAST MAN STANDING (R)
FLY AWAY HOME (PG)
RICH MAN'S WIFE (R)
SPITFIRE GRILL (PG13)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

Showcase Pontiac 6-12
2405 Telegraph Rd. East side of Telegraph
810-334-6777
Bargain Matinees Daily
• All Shows Until 6 pm
Continuous Shows Daily
• Late Shows Fri. & Sat.
FIRST WIVES CLUB (PG)
MAXIMUM RISK (R)
FEELING MINNESOTA (R)
BULLETPROOF (R)
FIRST KID (PG)
EMMA (PG)
TIN CUP (R)
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Quo Vadis
Warren & Wayne Rds.
313-425-7700
Bargain Matinees Daily
All Shows Until 6 pm
Continuous Shows Daily
*Late Shows Wed. Thurs. Fri. & Sat.
LAST MAN STANDING (R)
RICH MAN'S WIFE (R)
MAXIMUM RISK (R)
BULLETPROOF (R)
INDEPENDENCE DAY (PG13)
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Showcase Westland 1-8
6800 Wayne Rd.,
One blk S. of Warren Rd.
313-729-1060
Bargain Matinees Daily
All Shows Until 6 pm
Continuous Shows Daily
*Late Shows Wed. Thurs. Fri. & Sat.
FIRST WIVES CLUB (PG)
FLY AWAY HOME (PG)
FEELING MINNESOTA (R)
SPITFIRE GRILL (PG13)
FIRST KID (PG)
THE CROW: CITY OF ANGELS (R)
TIN CUP (R)
A TIME TO KILL (R)
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FRIDAY - THURSDAY
NP FIRST WIVES CLUB (PG)
NP RICH MAN'S WIFE (R)
NP GRACE OF MY HEART (R)
BULLET PROOF (R)
FIRST KID (PG)
THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU (R)
NP TIN CUP (R)
TIME TO KILL (R)
INDEPENDENCE DAY (PG13)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

Star Rochester Hills
200 Barclay Circle
853-2260
FRIDAY THRU THURSDAY
NP THE FIRST WIVES CLUB (PG)
NP LAST MAN STANDING (R)
NP MAXIMUM RISK (R)
NP RICH MAN'S WIFE (R)
NP FEELING MINNESOTA (R)
SPITFIRE GRILL (PG13)
NP TIN CUP (R)
A TIME TO KILL (R)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

Star Winchester
1136 S. Rochester Rd. Winchester Mall
656-1160
NP FLY AWAY HOME (PG)
BOGUS (PG)
FIRST KID (PG)
A VERY BRADY SEQUEL (PG13)
MATILDA (PG)
SHE'S THE ONE (R)
INDEPENDENCE DAY (PG13)
EMMA (PG)
JACK (PG13)
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SUPERCOP (R)
A VERY BRADY SEQUEL (PG13)
COLD COMFORT FARM (PG)
SPITFIRE GRILL (PG13)
TRAINSPOTTING (R)
EMMA (R)
MATILDA (PG)
INDEPENDENCE DAY (PG13)
TRIGGER EFFECT (R)
SOLO (PG13)
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United Artists Oakland
Inside Oakland Mall
810-585-7041
DOUBLE FEATURE-
THE CROW 2 (R)
SUPERCOP (R)
NV FLY AWAY HOME (PG)
A VERY BRADY SEQUEL (PG13)
MATILDA (PG
NV FEELING MINNESOTA (R)
ESCAPE FROM L.A. (R)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

United Artists 12 Oaks
Inside Twelve Oaks Mall
810-585-7041
NV FIRST WIVES CLUB (PG)
NV FLY AWAY HOME (PG)
NV RICH MAN'S WIFE (R)
SPITFIRE GRILL (PG13)
INDEPENDENCE DAY (PG13)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

United Artists West River
9 Mile,
2 Block West of Middlebelt
[illegible]
NV FIRST WIVES CLUB
LAST MAN STANDING (R)
NV MAXIMUM RISK (R)
SPITFIRE GRILL (PG13)
A VERY BRADY SEQUEL (PG13)
NV FEELING MINNESOTA (R)
BULLET PROOF (R)
FIRST KID (PG)
A TIME TO KILL (R)
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[illegible] Theatre
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[illegible]
211 S. Woodward
Downtown Birmingham
644-3456
NP Denotes No Pass Engagements
THRU THURSDAY
NP FIRST WIVES CLUB (PG)
NP GRACE OF MY HEART (R)
NP FEELING MINNESOTA (R)
NP FLY AWAY HOME (PG)
SPITFIRE GRILL (PG13)
SHE'S THE ONE (R)
LONESTAR (R)
EMMA (PG)
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MJR THEATRES
99¢ Livonia Mall
Livonia Mall at 7 mile
313-476-8800
ALL SEATS 99¢ ALL SHOWS
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KING PIN
HOUSE ARREST (PG)
MULTIPLICITY
NUTTY PROFESSOR (PG13)
No children under 4 after 6 pm except on 'G' or 'PG' rated films
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Main Art Theatre III
Main - 11 Mile
Royal Oak
(313) 542-0180
$3.00 (TWI-LITE) SHOWS DAILY
AMERICAN BUFFALO (R)
SPITFIRE GRILL (PG13)
TRAINSPOTTING (R)
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Waterford Cinema 8
7501 Highland Rd.
S.E. corner M-59 & Williams Lake Rd.
24 Hour Movie Line
(810) 666-7900
LAST MAN STANDING
BULLET PROOF (R)
MAXIMUM RISK (R)
ID4
MATILDA (PG)
TIME TO KILL (R)
FIRST KID (PG)
FLY AWAY HOME (PG)
JACK (PG13)
SPITFIRE GRILL (PG13)
TIN CUP (R)
FIRST WIVES CLUB
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$1.50 Waterford Twin
M-59 (Highland) at Crescent Lake Rd.
810-674-4050
ALL SEATS $1.50 ALL SHOWS
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NUTTY PROFESSOR (PG13)
KING PIN
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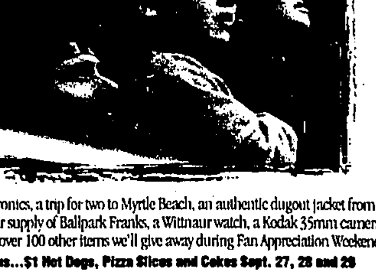

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