MOVIES

PHILLIP CARUS

Sweet success: *Steve Zahn, Jonathon Schaech, Tom Everett Scott, Liv Tyler and Ethan Embry react when they learn that their signature song is rising to the top of the charts in "That Thing You Do!"*

Hanks mines rock's last innocent days

TICKETS PLEASE

JOHN MONAGHAN

With "That Thing You Do!" first-time director Tom Hanks has created a feature-length version of "Happy Days." His idealized America in 1964 is seen through the eyes of a talented young drummer whose rock band hits the top of the charts.Practicing nightly in an Erie, Pennsylvania garage, the Wonders have picked up the licks and spirit of The Beatles, troubadours of the British Invasion. Their signature song, "That Thing You Do!" lands them first prize in a local talent competition and a weekend gig at a pizza restaurant by the airport.

It's all uphill from there — almost. Soon they're playing state fairs, signed by Playtone Records and represented by a slick manager (played by Tom Hanks). He wrangles them a small part in a beach movie and then instant fame on an Ed Sullivan-like variety show.

The director has found an alter ego in Tom Everett Scott, whose drummer Guy Patterson looks like a young version of Hanks: cute, a little gawky, naturally talented, and just oozing sincerity. Seeing him and Hanks together on screen looks more like father and son than musician and manager.

The drummer is usually the goofy one, but the gags here go mostly to Lenny, the guitar player, who himself resembles a young Jeff Daniels. This "Muppet Babies" approach to casting brings a certain comfort level to the movie, but also hints at how formulaic it all is.

The music, by Howard Shore, captures the period well. It's a credit to the title song that I barely got sick of hearing it even after a dozen times. As in the infinitely more ambitious "Grace of My Heart," the movie has our heroes interact with thinly-disguised versions of real-life performers of the time.

Set in the months shortly after the JFK assassination, the movie has done its homework fairly well. It mines the usual pop culture icons and also tips a hat to Richard Lester's "A Hard Day's Night," especially in a montage in which the boys tumble across a yard-sized map of the United States.

Hanks, who also wrote the script, treats this story without a trace of irony. He gets caught up in the optimism of the band and of the time, best seen in the moment where Lenny, awed by the thousands who have come to see them, asks Guy, "How did we get here?"

But the honesty that Hanks has made a career out of in his own performances doesn't always translate to "That Thing You Do!" Like the title song, it's got a nice beat, you can dance to it, but it's also so derivative of things we've encountered before that it's barely worth sitting through again.

Hanks falls especially short in the romantic department, keeping a girl on the side who you just know Guy is going to fall for. She's played by Liv Tyler, who, like contemporary Cameron Diaz, has chosen a strange plate of films (including Bertolucci's "Stealing Beauty") to make her a star.

And, strangely enough, this may be the only irony: In a movie about one-hit wonders, "That Thing You Do!" helps make Tyler little more than this year's model.

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.

SCREEN SCENE

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

Birmingham Theatre211 S. Woodward, Birmingham. Call (810) 644-FILM for information. ($6.50; $4.25 matinees and seniors)

• "Basquiat" (USA - 1996). Artist-turned-director Julian Schnabel's account of the life of contemporary Jean-Michel Basquiat, a New York graffiti artist who rose to fame in the 1980s. Co-starring Gary Oldman, Dennis Hopper, and David Bowie as an appropriately spacey Andy Warhol.

• "Stonewall" (USA - 1996). A fictionalized account of the real Greenwich Village uprising in 1969 that launched the modern gay rights movement.

Detroit Film Theatre5200 Woodward, Detroit. Call (313) 832-2730 for information. ($5.50; $4.50 students/seniors)

• "Cold Fever" (Iceland/USA - 1995). Oct. 4 - 6 (call for showtimes). A young Tokyo executive, anticipating a golf vacation in Hawaii, is instead compelled to visit a remote outpost in Iceland.

• "Who Killed Pasolini?" (Italy - 1995). 7 p.m. Oct. 7. An eye-opening dramatization of the death of the controversial Italian author and filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini.

Magic Bag Theatre22920 Woodward, Ferndale. Call (810) 544-3030 for information. ($2)

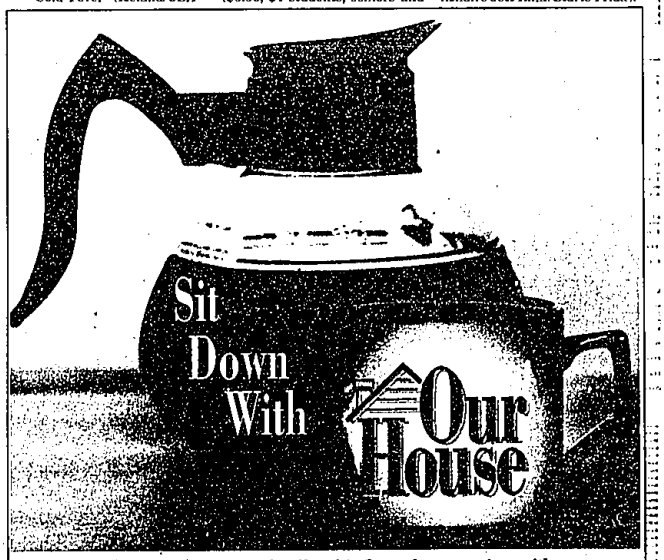
• "Superfly" (USA - 1980). 9:30 p.m. Oct. 9. Some would call it the quintessential 1970s' blaxploitation film, about a sharp-dressing Harlem drug dealer out for one last score. Curtis Mayfield supplies the incredible soundtrack.

Main Art Theatre118 N. Main Street at 11 Mile, Royal Oak. Films play through at least Thursday, unless noted otherwise. Call (810) 542-0180 for information and showtimes. ($6.50; $4 students, seniors and matinee; $3 twilight)

• "Big Night" (USA - 1996). A pair of brothers try to run an authentic Italian restaurant in the 1950s but discover that most people want simple spaghetti and meatballs. An independent comedy co-directed by and starring Stanley Tucci.

• "Wallace and Grommit: The Best of Aardman Animation." The work of British animator Nick Park is highlighted in this entertaining compilation. Commercials and short cartoons are mere warmups for the 30-minute "A Close Shave," last year's Oscar-winning cartoon about a wacky English inventor and his faithful pooch. Starts Friday.

• "Giant" (USA - 1956). "Gone With the Wind" wears a Stetson in this epic melodrama starring Elizabeth Taylor and Rock Hudson. Both are shown up by James Dean, in his final performance as ranchhand-turned-millionaire Jett Rink. Starts Friday.



Have your first cup of coffee this Saturday morning with "Our House," Detroit Edison's Home Energy Conservation Show. Let Tom Tynan and Paula Engel get your mind percolating this Saturday at 6:30 a.m. Find out ways to make your home more energy efficient, saving you money and helping to preserve the environment at the same time.

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OBSERVER & ECCENTRIC GUIDE TO THE MOVIES

AMC Theatres
Bargain matinees daily plus $1.00 (No 3-D) show daily. Limited seating. No passes. No Free Passes. Prices are subject to change without notice. Please call theatre for specials.

AMC Kingsmill 8
Rochester Rd. (1 mile south of M-59) 852-5322
$1.00 all shows
THE ARRIVAL (PG13)
FLIPPER (PG)
PERSONAL FEAR (R)
DRACONHEART (PG13)
TRUTH ABOUT CATS & DOGS (PG13)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

AMC Abbey 8
FAX at Hall 588-6581
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)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

AMC Americana West 6
Orchard Lake Rd. S. of 15 Mile. 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 RAZAAM (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)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

AMC Old Orchard
Orchard Lk. Rd. N of 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 Woodland 6
Woodland Mall behind Target 261-8100
No children under 6 after 6 PM except (PG) and (G) rated movies
NP RAZAAM (PG)
SUPERCOP (R)
NP FLED (R)
COURAGE UNDER FIRE (R)
NP THE FRIGHTENERS (R)
NP JOE'S APARTMENT (PG13)
PHENOMENON (PG)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

AMC Laurel Park 10
6 Mile between Newburgh & I-275 462-4250
No children under 6 after 6 PM except (G) and (PG) rated movies
FLED (R) KINGPIN (PG13)
NUTTY PROFESSOR (PG13)
MULTIPLICITY (PG13)
THE ROCK
A TIME TO KILL (R)
ID 4 (PG13)
PHENOMENON (PG)
FRIGHTENERS (R)
COURAGE UNDER FIRE (R)
JOE'S APARTMENT (PG13)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

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)
RAZAAM (PG)
FLED (R)
FRIGHTENERS (R)
A TIME TO KILL (R)
NP JOE'S APARTMENT (PG13)
HARRIET THE SPY (PG)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

General Cinemas
Bargain matinees daily plus $3.25 (Twilight) show daily
Canton 6
Ford Rd., 1 Mile west of I-275 981-1900
Advanced same-day tickets available Friday thru Thursday
VERY READY SEQUEL (PG13)
TIN CUP (R)
LAST MAN STANDING (R)
FIRST KID (PG)
FLY AWAY HOME (PG)
FIRST WIVES CLUB (PG)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

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

Kroger Twin Cinema
Orchard Lake Rd. at Cass Lake Rd. 682-1900
All Seats $1.50 before 6 pm
Family Matinee Fri.-Sat.-Sun
MATILDA (PG)
MULTIPLICITY (PG13)
STREETGAN (R)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

National Amusements Showcase Cinemas
Showcase Auburn Hills 1-10
2150 N. Opdyke Rd. Between University & Walton Blvd 810-373-3660
Bargain Matinees Daily, All Shows until 6 pm
Continuous Shows Daily
*Late Shows Wed. Thurs. Fri. Sat.
EXTREME MEASURES (R)
EMMA (PG)
FIRST WIVES CLUB (PG)
LAST MAN STANDING (R)
FLY AWAY HOME (PG)
MAXIMUM RISK (R)
RICH MAN'S WIFE (R)
BULLETPROOF (R)
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 Southfield 1-8
Michigan & Telegraph 313-563-3660
Bargain Matinees Daily, All Shows until 6 pm.
Continuous Shows Daily
*Late Shows Fri. & Sat. & Sun.
EXTREME MEASURES (R)
LAST MAN STANDING (R)
RICH MAN'S WIFE (R)
MAXIMUM RISK (R)
BULLETPROOF (R)
FIRST KID (PG)
TIN CUP (R)
A TIME TO KILL (R)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

Showcase Pontiac 1-5
Telegraph & Lake Rd. N. of Orchard Lake Rd. 810-332-0241
Bargain Matinees Daily, All Shows until 6 pm
Continuous Shows Daily
*Late Shows Fri. & Sat. & Sun.
EXTREME MEASURES (R)
LAST MAN STANDING (R)
FLY AWAY HOME (PG)
RICH MAN'S WIFE (R)
A TIME TO KILL (R)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

Showcase Pontiac 6-12
2425 Telegraph Rd. South of Telegraph 810-334-6777
Bargain Matinees Daily, All Shows until 6 pm
Continuous Shows Daily
*Late Shows Fri. & Sat.
TWO DAYS IN THE VALLEY (R)
FIRST WIVES CLUB (PG)
MAXIMUM RISK (R)
BULLETPROOF (R)
FIRST KID (PG)
EMMA (PG)
TIN CUP (R)
INDEPENDENCE DAY (PG13)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

Star Madison
Madison Heights 398-7300
EXTREME MEASURES (R)
LAST MAN STANDING (R)
RICH MAN'S WIFE (R)
MAXIMUM RISK (R)
BULLETPROOF (R)
FIRST KID (PG)
TIN CUP (R)
A TIME TO KILL (R)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

Showcase Westland 1-8
6600 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.
TWO DAYS IN THE VALLEY (R)
FIRST WIVES CLUB (PG)
FLY AWAY HOME (PG)
FEELING MINNESOTA (R)
SPITFIRE GRILL (PG13)
FIRST KID (PG)
TIN CUP (R)
A TIME TO KILL (R)
RICH MAN'S WIFE
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

Star Theatres
The World's Best Theatres
Bargain Matinees Daily $4.00 All Shows Starting before 6:00 pm
Now accepting Visa & MasterCard
"NP" Denotes No Pass Engagement
Star John R at 14 Mile
32283 John R. Road 585-3070
CALL FOR SATURDAY SHOWTIMES FRIDAY - THURSDAY
NP EXTREME MEASURES (R)
NP THE LEOPARD'S SON (G)
NP FIRST WIVES CLUB (PG)
RICH MAN'S WIFE (R)
BULLET PROOF (R)
FIRST KID (PG)
TIN CUP (R)
TIME TO KILL (R)
INDEPENDENCE DAY (PG13)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

Star Rochester Hills
2200 Barclay Circle 853-3260
FRIDAY THRU THURSDAY
NP TWO DAYS IN THE VALLEY (R)
NP EXTREME MEASURES (R)
NP THE FIRST WIVES CLUB (PG)
NP LAST MAN STANDING (R)
NP MAXIMUM RISK (R)
SPITFIRE GRILL (PG13)
TIN CUP (R)
A TIME TO KILL (R)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

Star Winchester
1156 S. Rochester Rd. Rochester Hills 656-1160
FLY AWAY HOME (PG)
FIRST KID (PG)
A VERY READY SEQUEL (PG13)
INDEPENDENCE DAY (PG13)
EMMA (PG)
JACK (PG13)
BULLETPROOF (R)
RICH MAN'S WIFE (R)
FEELING MINNESOTA (R)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

United Artists Theatres
Bargain Matinees Daily, total shows starting before 6:00 PM
Same day advance tickets available. No free VIP passes accepted
United Artists Fairlane
Fairlane Town Center
West Dearborn Area
313-593-4790
ALL TYMES FOR FRI., SAT. & SUN. ONLY
NY FIRST WIVES CLUB (PG)
BASQUIAT (R)
SHE'S THE ONE (R)
FLY AWAY HOME (PG)
DOUBLE FEATURE
THE CROW (R)
SUPERCOP (R)
A VERY READY SEQUEL (PG13)
SPITFIRE GRILL (PG13)
TRAINSPOTTING (R)
EMMA (R)
INDEPENDENCE DAY (PG13)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

United Artists Oakland
Inside Oakland Mall 810 544 7949
NY TWO DAYS IN THE VALLEY (R)
BASQUIAT (R)
DOUBLE FEATURE
THE CROW 2 (R)
SUPERCOP (R)
NY FLY AWAY HOME (PG)
A VERY READY SEQUEL (PG13)
FEELING MINNESOTA (R)
ESCAPE FROM L.A. (R)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

United Artists 12 Oaks
Inside Twelve Oaks Mall 810-348-7941
NY TWO DAYS IN THE VALLEY (R)
NY FIRST WIVES CLUB (PG)
NY EXTREME MEASURES (R)
FLY AWAY HOME (PG)
INDEPENDENCE DAY (PG13)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

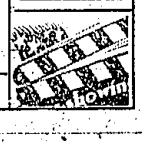
United Artists West Brae
9 Mile, 2 Block West of Middlebelt 810-968-6943
NY EXTREME MEASURES (R)
NY FIRST WIVES CLUB (PG)
ON TWO SCREENS
LAST MAN STANDING (R)
SPITFIRE GRILL (PG13)
BULLET PROOF (R)
MAXIMUM RISK (R)
INDEPENDENCE DAY (PG13)
FIRST KID (PG)
A TIME TO KILL (R)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

Cinema's Terrace Theatre
30400 Plymouth Livonia 261-3110
Late Shows on Friday & Saturday Only!
Every Tuesday all seats 2$!
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

BIRMINGHAM THEATRE
211 S. Woodward Downtown Birmingham 644-3456
NP Denotes No Pass Engagements
THRU THURSDAY
NP BASQUIAT (R)
NP EXTREME MEASURES (R)
NP FIRST WIVES CLUB (PG)
FEELING MINNESOTA (R)
FLY AWAY HOME (PG)
SPITFIRE GRILL (PG13)
SHE'S THE ONE (R)
EMMA (PG)
TIN CUP (R)
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

MJR THEATRES
99¢ Uptowns Mall
Livonia Mall at 7 mile 313-476-6600
ALL SEATS 99¢ ALL SHOWS
FREE Refill on Drinks & Popcorn
RAZAAM (PG)
KING PIN
MATILDA (PG)
MULTIPLICITY
NUTTY PROFESSOR (PG13)
No children under 6 after 6 pm except on "G" or "PG" rated films
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

Main Art Theatre III
Main - 11 Mile Royal Oak (313) 542-0180
$3.00 (TWI-LITE) SHOWS DAILY
BIG NIGHT (R)
TRAINSPOTTING (R)
SPITFIRE GRILL (PG13)
Children Under 6 Not Admitting
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

Waterford Cinema II
7501 Highland Rd. S.E. corner M-59 & Williams Lake Rd.
24 Hour Movie Line (810) 666-7900
MAXIMUM RISK
BULLET PROOF (R)
LAST MAN STANDING
ID 4
FIRST KID (PG)
TIME TO KILL (R)
2 DAYS IN THE VALLEY (R)
FLY AWAY HOME (PG)
JACK (PG13)
TIN CUP (R)
EXTREME MEASURES (R)
FIRST WIVES CLUB
Visa & Mastercard Accepted
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

11-50 Waterford Twin
M-59 (Highland) at Crescent Lake Rd. 810-674-0050
ALL SEATS $1.50 ALL SHOWS
FREE Refill on Drinks & Popcorn
RAZAAM (PG)
NUTTY PROFESSOR (PG13)
MATILDA (PG)
MULTIPLICITY (PG13)
No children under 6 after 6 pm except on "G" or "PG" rated films
CALL FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES