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Tony 'n' Tina's Wedding

A Greenwich Street production in association with Drewmark Prods. Produced by Roger Paradiso, Michael Tadros, Tony Travis, Mark Lipsky. Co-producers, Justin Morrit, Glen Trotliner, Pat McCorkle. Directed, written by Roger Paradiso, based on a play by Artificial Intelligence.

With: Joey McIntyre, Mila Kunis, Priscilla Lopez, John Fiore, Krista Allen, Kim Director, Richard Portnow, Daisy Eagan, Dean Edwards, Guillermo Diaz, Matthew Saldivar, Adrian Grenier, Richard Robichaux, John Bernthal, Mary Testa, Letty Serra, Clement Fowler, Donnie Keshawarz, Tony Travis.

By RONNIE SCHEIB

A rousing, hilarious Bacchanal of family togetherness, Roger Paradiso's brilliantly cinematic adaptation of the second-longest running play in Off-Broadway history might be the best of the recent rash of wedding pics. "Tony 'n' Tina's Wedding" never lets up, dynamically orchestrating seeming chaos with beautifully timed detours. By presenting over-the-top ethnic stereotypes subjectively, from the bride's and groom's POVs, , Paradiso never has to blunt the satiric slapstick punch of a pic that, a la Christopher Guest, presents people of all persuasions as equals in idiocy. If auds could be persuaded to RSVP to one more nuptial, "TNT" could take off theatrically, particularly with crossover, non-chick-flick auds.

Tony (Joey McIntyre) and Tina (Mila Kunis) have seriously considered eloping to escape their respective families. Tina's widowed mother (Priscilla Lopez) and Tony's divorced father (John Fiore), who once dated in high school, now hate each other's guts, (squaring off in escalating confrontations throughout the proceedings).

Pic opens with "Lady of the Lake"-type subjective camerawork that alternates between bride's and groom's-eye view. In a pristine suburban house, mint green garbed bridesmaids hover while mama paces, growing steadily more commanding and hysterical. Meanwhile, in semidarkness, sodden buddies passed out all over the family's strip joint resist the groom's attempts to wake them as macho dad makes lame jokes with meatballs.

The camera remains uncomfortably subjective through the bride's ride to church through affluent Long Island streets -- and the groom's through the less-picturesque areas of Queens. Paradiso mocks the suspense surrounding the traditional first appearance of the bridal couple by allowing the audience no glimpse of either bride or groom until their respective vehicles pass in front of the viewfinder of the wedding videographer (Guillermo Diaz). Later, further helping to open up the proceedings, the videographer, a gay Hispanic who works in 16mm film and has his own cameraman, flits into the picture at intervals to call attention to some particularly explosive or juicy detail.

There are early rumblings of thundering motifs to come: the loud sobbing of Tina's mother, which virtually drowns out the vows; the tumultuous entrance of Tina's old flame, Michael (Adrian Grenier) forcibly restrained during the "if anyone can show just cause" part of the ceremony; the rollicking Baptist intonations that occasionally bubble up and take over the black priest's (Dean Edwards) otherwise Roman Church-like delivery.

Things really begin to roll downhill at the liberally liquored reception, where "Wedding's" huge ensemble cast all contribute to the magnificently choreographed mayhem, captured in long sweeping takes through the room. Lenser Giselle Chamma picks up simultaneous action in several parts of the frame in the best Altman tradition: When bridesmaids aren't passing out in the rigatoni or making cow eyes at the band's lead singer, or when the father of the groom isn't crashing through the scenery with his latest stripper or the ex-b.f. splashing down on the wedding cake, they all take time out to deliver boozy, sentimental addresses to the camera for the videographer.

Meanwhile, Tony and Tina's conflicted loyalties over their increasingly combative dad and mom begin to divide the less-than-happy couple, as they contemplate the ultimate familial nightmare -- that they will become their parents. The gags may not be unique or brilliant, but their layering is so well timed that the laughs never cease. The whirlwind of comic detail encompasses everyone in the huge cast, from the one-hit bandleader whose integrity won't allow him to cover the playlist, to the owner/emcee of the stucco Coliseum whose stale patter seems older than the Roman original.

Patricia Woodbridge's production design and Richard Owings' costumes match the pic's degree of caricature to a tee, never in-your-face garish, but with just the right note of polyester deja-vu.

Cinematography, editing, music and sound credits are superlative. ___ Camera (color, Super 16mm), Giselle Chamma; editor, Jennifer Davidoff Cook; music producer, Joey Carbone, executive music producer, Tony Travis; production designer, Patricia Woodbridge; costume designer, Richard Owings; choreographer, Lisa Shriver; supervising sound editor (Dolby Digital), Robert Hein; associate producers, Michael Tadross Jr., Terry Ladin. Reviewed at Tribeca Film Festival, May 3, 2004. Running time: 108 MIN.