

Music

## Live music brings out strengths

Widespread Panic  
"Light Fuse, Get Away"  
Capricorn Records  
Grade: B+

It is difficult in modern music for bands to develop their sound. For many bands it may take a few years to establish an identity. This is the situation that faces the band Widespread Panic.

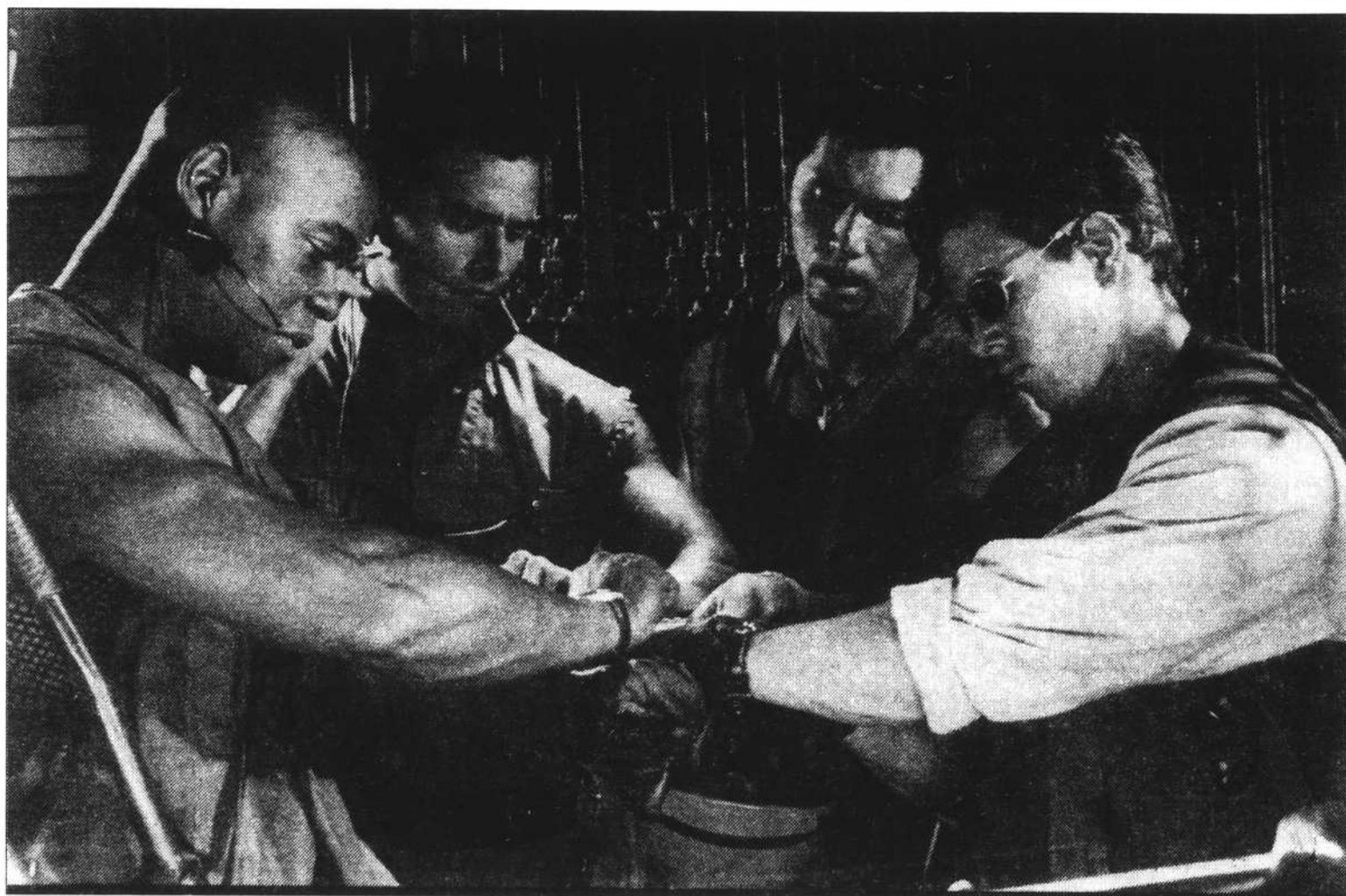
The band's latest release is a double-live album which captures a performance from the tour that accompanied last year's "Bombs and Butterflies" release. On the surface, it would appear that the group falls into the classification of contemporary jam-based bands such as Phish or the Dave Matthews Band. However, Widespread Panic's sound harkens back to the Southern rock genre of The Allman Brothers Band, Lynyrd Skynyrd and the Outlaws.

The extensive use of improvisation showcases the band's instrumental strength (most notably, the guitar/organ interplay). The live format proves to be the band's strong suit, as opposed to the confines of a studio release. Rather than fade each song out at five minutes the band goes to great lengths (such as the 10-minute "Porch/Jam") to explore every possibility the song has to offer. The extension of each song proves to be a winning technique for the band. The songs remain focused and never seem to lose direction. But the band's set list, like its previous album, could use a bit more diversity because it becomes difficult to distinguish one song from the next.

Once again, the band proves that its strength lies in live performance. While the material isn't terribly innovative, it's thoroughly enjoyable.

If this album is any indication of where Widespread Panic is headed, it's evident that although the band may be limited in the studio, it can always take its music on the road.

- Patrick Kelly



"THE BIG HIT" stars (from left) Bokeem Woodbine, Antonio Sabato Jr., Lou Diamond Phillips and Mark Wahlberg as a team of hit men. COURTESY PHOTO

## 'The Big Hit' makes a big miss

By JEFF RANDALL  
Film Critic

At least Mark Wahlberg knows his limitations.

The former pseudo-rap star and recently acclaimed actor doesn't have the range of Gary Oldman, or the tenacity of Al Pacino. If he went for the big dramatic leads or Shakespeare-type virtuoso pieces, he would - in all likelihood - stink the joint up.

Luckily for him, and us, he realizes this. And instead of going for a prestige piece after his touted performance in "Boogie Nights," he opted for "The Big Hit."

Wahlberg stars as a professional killer in "The Big Hit," a Hong Kong-flavored action-comedy that

showcases Wahlberg, even if it doesn't necessarily challenge him.

The Hong Kong feel to this film is no accident. Action legend John Woo is an executive producer, and the film is directed by Che-Kirk Wong, a Woo-like action maestro who has worked with Jackie Chan.

No surprise, the action sequences in this film are remarkable. Visually exciting and entrancing, "The Big Hit" scores points with nearly every frame of gun blazing, kick boxing and jaw breaking. It may not be revolutionary, but Wong shows a definite eye for intense and volatile film work.

Unfortunately, films such as this also require a plot. And "The Big Hit" is seriously lacking in this department.

Wahlberg stars as Mel, a hit man who tries to lead an ordinary life (out-

side of work, of course). But, business gets in the way of his pleasure.

His rivalry with fellow hit man Cisco (Lou Diamond Phillips) and his fiancée's (Christina Applegate) demands end up complicating things.

And an assignment that ends up turning on Mel, making him the target of a hit, doesn't make things any easier.

Sound familiar? Well, sort of. "Grosse Pointe Blank" covered this ground well, and this retelling of a normal-guy-who-kills-people-for-a-living tale is not worth duplicating.

In many cases, the comedy does work. But there's nothing worth rolling in the aisles over; and in the end, the comedy bits start to feel like filler between the glorious action sequences.

Wahlberg is believable as an ordinary guy who has an out-of-the-ordi-

### The Facts

Title: "The Big Hit"  
Stars: Mark Wahlberg, Lou Diamond Phillips, Christina Applegate  
Director: Che-Kirk Wong  
Rating: R  
Grade: C  
Five Words: "Big Hit" misses too often

inary career. And his supporting cast is just that, supporting players with little character depth or screen time.

As a result, "The Big Hit" fails to live up to its name. Chances are, it will be hitting the dollar-theater circuit before too long. Save some money and wait for that to happen before seeing it.

## New MTV veejay unique

NEW YORK (AP) - He only wanted a brief glimpse of MTV from the inside - just for fun, to join 4,000 other hopefuls grabbing at the instant fame that the absurdly popular music television network bestows upon viewers now and then.

Last Monday night, Josiah "Jesse" Camp, all of 19, found himself sitting in the veejay's chair in MTV's Times Square studios, freestyling his own lyrics, interviewing Lenny Kravitz, taking a call from Jakob Dylan and wading into Manhattan's rush-hour crowds for a few quick absurdist interviews with fans. Even veteran news anchor Kurt Loder had this to say: "Jesse, you ARE rock and roll."

Thanks to MTV and his own peculiar brand of charisma, Jesse Camp had arrived.

"You gotta go nuts. You never know how long this is gonna last," he said. "You get in these crazy situations and the only way you can deal with it is not to take it seriously."

Camp made his live-television debut five months after arriving in Manhattan from suburban

Connecticut and two days after being selected by producers and viewers from the would-be talent that showed up at the network's door last week for its "become a veejay" contest. Viewer participation has been a staple of MTV since the very beginning, when the station flew a contest winner to Hawaii in 1982 to party with the then-popular Devo. Somewhat to MTV's surprise, the network had never issued an open casting call for veejays.

"One of the things we really want to do is re-identify with the audience," said Dave Sirulnick, executive vice president for MTV news and productions.

"We didn't know going in who would be great and who wouldn't," he said. But with Jesse, "it was clear there was that spark - something there."

Though he had no on-air experience, Jesse was prepared. He is a fringe rock icon waiting to happen - Nosferatu build, Ziggy Stardust face, hair that combines Medusa with Don King on a humid day.

And his voice - well, his voice made the whole thing worthwhile. A

strange, throaty melange, it echoed Spicoli from "Fast Times" and Bob Dylan, with undertones of Barry White.

He used it to his advantage, freestyling lyrics throughout the show, letting loose with a six-minute extravaganza that even rhymed "China" with "Honda." Jaws dropped backstage.

"He's good - he's actually cool!" one staffer said. And this from the network's production executive, Sirulnick: "We gotta sign him up to cut a record."

Staffers who gathered to watch his debut were skeptical. Could he pull it off? By the end, heads were shaking, faces grinning: He was a natural.

Jesse, who just graduated from high school last June, will be on for at least a month, MTV says, and then he'll probably be part of the network's summer programming. Nobody's ruling out that the kid will end up a permanent fixture on MTV.

"This is the best thing that's ever happened to me," he said. "I got 20 girls' numbers just in the past few days."

"OK, maybe not 20. I guess I'm embellishing a little."

## Crime, love stories win big at box office

LOS ANGELES (AP) - Crime paid more than love as "The Big Hit" seized the top box office slot in the United States and Canada in its opening weekend, while "Titanic" became the first film to gross more than \$1 billion internationally.

"The Big Hit," an action comedy starring Mark Wahlberg, Lou Diamond Phillips and Antonio Sabato Jr. with China Chow as their kidnap victim, earned an estimated \$11 million, surpassing the supernatural romance "City of Angels," which led for its first two weekends.

"City of Angels," starring Nicolas Cage as an angel who has to choose between immortality and life as a human with heart surgeon Meg Ryan as his love interest, came in second with \$9 million.

"Titanic" was tied for third at \$5 million with another love story, "The Object of My

Please see MOVIES on 13

## Top movies

Here are the estimated grosses for the top movies at North American theaters for Friday through Sunday.

1. "The Big Hit" \$11 million
2. "City of Angels" \$9 million
3. (tie) "The Object of My Affection" \$5 million
3. (tie) "Titanic" \$5 million
5. "Lost in Space" \$4.4 million
6. "Paulie" \$4.3 million
7. "Neil Simon's The Odd Couple II" \$5 million
8. "The Players Club" \$2.2 million
9. "Mercury Rising" \$2.1 million
10. "Scream 2" \$1.8 million