

Flimsy story lines hurt gangster film, comedy

By Gerri Pare
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — Real-life gangster Bugsy Siegel gets a larger-than-life Hollywood treatment in the story of his dream to make a gambling empire out of the desert town of Las Vegas in *Bugsy* (Tri-Star).

The movie focuses on Bugsy's (Warren Beatty) reckless affair in the early '40s with a minor Hollywood actress, Virginia "The Flamingo" Hill (Annette Bening).

His obsession with her was so complete and led to his life's ending in a hail of mob bullets when he wouldn't turn her in for stealing millions as she oversaw construction costs for Bugsy's posh Hotel Flamingo and casino that was built with mob money.

Director Barry Levinson elicits good performances from Beatty, Bening and co-stars such as Joe Mantegna playing Bugsy's childhood pal George Raft and Ben Kingsley as partner-in-crime Meyer Lansky.

With a swanky elegance, the movie also stylishly showcases the clothes, the cars and the music of the era, but it stumbles on the basics by creating a bloated soap-opera relationship between the leads. Their jealous rages soon become boring and the callous

characters who surround them are just as uninteresting.

Though *Bugsy* is immediately established as a ruthless killer, little by little the movie starts treating him more as a vulnerable, romantic victim and visionary dreamer. Yet it never succeeds in convincing us that it's anything more than the story of a boorish bully and his proudly promiscuous moll.

Bugsy may fill viewers in on how Las Vegas got started as a gambling mecca, but its elongated melodramatics aren't worth the expense of a major motion picture.

Due to intermittent violence, an adulterous relationship and frequent rough language, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

Father of the Bride

Daddy's little girl is getting married and dad is having a conniption in *Father of the Bride* (Touchstone), a remake of the 1950 Spencer Tracy-Elizabeth Taylor charmer.

Annie (Kimberly Williams), 22, drops a bombshell when she returns from a course in Rome and tells her folks that she is marrying an American (George Newbern) she met there.



Warren Beatty stars as Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel in the action-packed gangster film *Bugsy*.

Dad (Steve Martin) doesn't want to lose the apple of his eye to some stranger. Mom (Diane Keaton), meanwhile, wants to throw a lovely — as in big bucks — wedding.

Producer Nancy Meyers and director Charles Shyer deliver all the best moments early on when Martin seemingly meets the fiance and next somehow manages to land in the in-laws' pool — clutching their bankbook.

After that moment of hilarity the movie coasts on sheer sentimentality. No story can be found, just the wed-

ding-in-the-family situation that most people can relate to.

Direction is pedestrian and Martin grabs all the laughs while Keaton's just along for the ride. Martin Short's shtick as the wacko wedding coordinator has some appeal, but like this comedy, it wears thin before the wedding cake's cut.

Because of fleeting sexual innuendo, the USCC classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

Attractive Bible dictionary provides useful features

THE REVELL BIBLE DICTIONARY, Deluxe Color Edition; Lawrence Richards, general editor; Flemming Revell Company (Old Tappan, N.J.); 1,156 pages; \$29.95.

By Monsignor Charles Diviney
Guest contributor

One possible, but not the most profitable, way to review a dictionary would be to start with the first word — in this case, Aaron — and go word by word to the last one — Zion.

That would be time consuming and fruitless. One would end up with an enormous jumble of ideas, and a mixture of Scripture, theology, history, religious customs, practices and creedal assertions.

A far better way would be to examine the volume as a whole.

For example, how extensively does it cover the subject? Is it comprehensive? What kind of illustrations does it have? Is the type easy on the eyes? Is

the binding strong and durable?

Then, does it have a good index or indices, and does it include any other tools to locate information? Does it have cross references, maps or diagrams?

Last, but not least, was the work compiled by reliable and reputable scholars?

Once assured of the overall worth or value of the book, one might test it by looking up half-dozen items chosen at random to see whether they were treated adequately, objectively and clearly.

This was my approach in reviewing *The Revell Bible Dictionary*.

The volume is attractively bound with a red and gold cover. The print on the inside pages is clear, strong and easy to read.

Now for some statistics: It has 6,750 entries and 1,700 graphics, including 212 color illustrations, 96 maps, 107 classic works of art and 1,000 full-color

photographs.

The dictionary also offers a feature I have never seen before — "The Identiquick Section," which is in two parts. One contains a list of 3,300 people who are in the Bible. The second is a similar list of 1,400 biblical places.

This enormous project was done under the editorship of Dr. Lawrence Richard, a scholar, writer and professor. He was assisted in assembling all this material by a team of researchers, writers, editors and designers.

The result is one of the most useful, attractive Bible dictionaries I have ever seen for private and home use.

The book possesses a number of other admirable qualities. For example, the listing for the word "Abraham" offers his genealogy, biography, importance to the history of Israel, and a summary of his inner spiritual journey.

But most valuable and practical is the personal assistance to our own faith that the story of Abraham can

have in today's world. So what you get here is not merely information, but also numerous instances of sound spiritual advice, which is unique for such a dictionary.

However, Catholics may at first find this volume to be less complete and thorough than they might wish. It fails, for example, to include listings for the names Judith and Tobit, although both are titles of books in Catholic editions of the Bible.

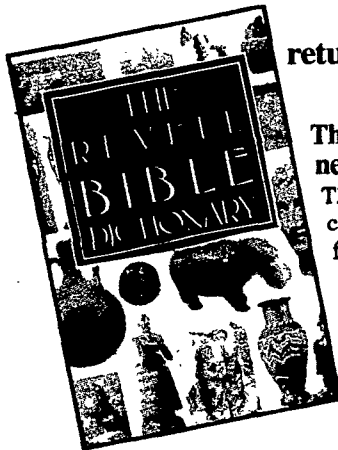
The reason is quite simple: This book was based on the Protestant and Jewish version of the Old Testament, which contains 39 books. Catholic and Orthodox Bibles comprise 46 books, seven of which are not treated in this dictionary.

Even so, I recommend this publication as valuable and useful for all.

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