

Family values do matter in 'Greek Wedding'

Andi Petrini
A&E Editor

As an avid movie fan, I decided it was finally time to see "My Big Fat Greek Wedding" and discover what box-office audiences are so excited about. The theater was packed when I took a seat in the back row, and the previous Friday-night show sold out. When the movie began, I knew why "My Big Fat Greek Wedding" is the unexpected box-office hit this year. Released in April, the \$5-million-budget movie has grossed more than \$100 million nationwide.

Nia Vardalos wrote and starred in the film, and I was amazed by how well written it is. When the movie opens, Vardalos' character, Fortolua "Toula" Portokalos, says she has been raised to do three things: marry a Greek man, make Greek babies and feed everyone until the day she dies.

While Toula does fall in love with an attractive high school English teacher, Ian Miller (John Corbett), he is not Greek. In order to be accepted by Toula's father, Gus,

he must integrate himself into the church and Gus's heart.

Michael Constantine plays Gus, who believes everything can be fixed or cured with Windex. He is tortured by his daughter's decision not to marry a Greek man, but in determining the origin of both last names, which mean apples and oranges in Greek, he decides, "In the end, we're all fruit."

I could relate well to the movie's portrayal of a large family. With the last name "Petrini," I am proud of my Italian descent, even though I have more family members than I can remember names for them all.

Whenever I return to my home in Vineland, N.J., family members surround me, shoving food in my face and talking a mile a minute. Before I can get a word in edgewise, another question is shot at me, without having given my answer a second thought.

I felt like my family was being profiled on the big screen as I watched "Wedding." Scenes exactly as I described were in front of me during the 95-minute movie.

While it can often be frustrating with so many Italians thinking they know me better than I know myself, it is because of my

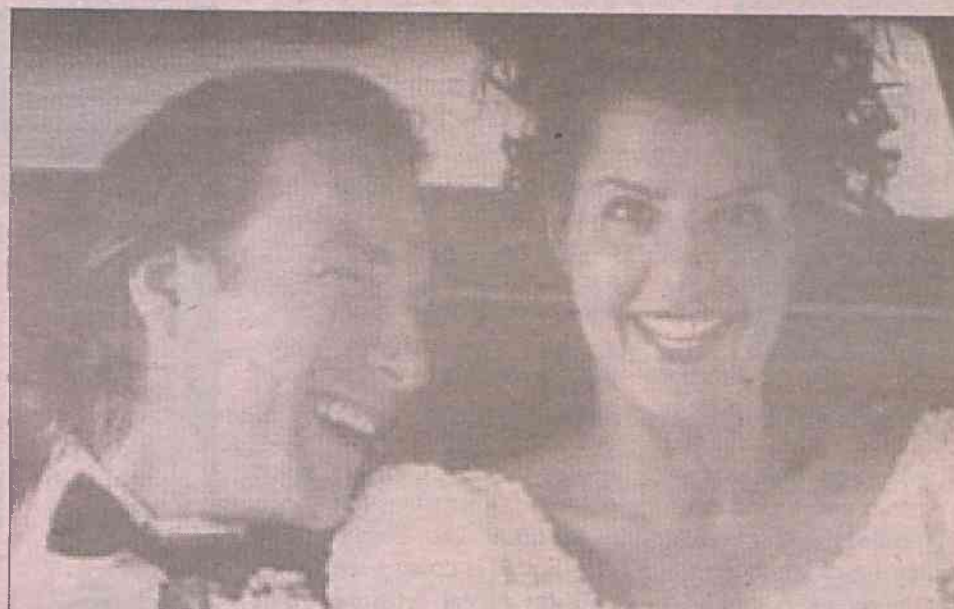


Photo courtesy of IFC Films

Corbett and Vardalos provide a stream of comedy through "Greek Wedding."

family I have grown to be an independent person, much like Toula. Using my family's advice and following my heart, I have been able to experience more in the past 21 years than most have experienced in a lifetime.

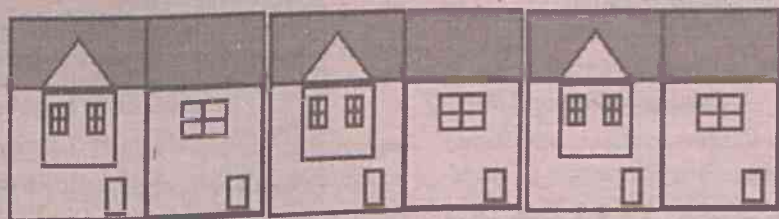
"My Big Fat Greek Wedding" reaches

audiences regardless of age or gender. Middle-aged men stood up from their seats with a smile and congratulated their wives for picking a decent movie that's not a "chick flick." I left the movie finally feeling like I had watched a film worth the ticket price.

commentary

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