

## Film review

### **The Prince of Tides**

*By Pat Conroy, directed by Barbra Streisand*

Poet Savannah Wingo attempts suicide, not for the first time, and is admitted under psychiatrist Susan Lowenstein (Barbra Streisand). Dr Lowenstein asks to see one of the family; her uptight mother won't come, so Savannah's brother Tom Wingo (Nick Nolte), a football coach with a shaky marriage, turns up from South Carolina instead. So far so good but I felt a little uneasy when the psychiatrist and her informant went off to have lunch together, even if she did only buy him a hot dog!

When she goes on and on seeing Tom in her consulting room, some form of therapy appears to be under way, so there is further cause for concern when they go to bed together (to say nothing of romping and making idyllic love *al fresco*!) There is no suggestion in this film that this behaviour is in any way unorthodox, let alone unethical. One can only hope that Savannah's eventual recovery will not be seriously compromised if she finds out that her doctor and her brother became lovers during her treatment. Hardly less surprising, as this is all supposed to be happening now, in New York, is our first meeting Savannah, bound by the wrists and ankles as a precaution against her suicidal impulses! And – oh dear, surely we don't still have to uncover something nasty in the woodshed (very, very nasty though it may be) for her to be made better?

So psychiatrists are likely to have difficulty in suspending disbelief long enough to enjoy this film. The allegedly therapeutic effects of American football for Dr Lowenstein's challenging adolescent son (rendered suitably odious by Streisand's actual son, Jason Gould) may further strain credulity. The winsome approach to Savannah's gay flat mate is pretty crass – subtlety is not the film's forte. However, there are good things – strong performances by Streisand, Nolte, Melinda Dillon as Savannah and,



*Tom Wingo (Nick Nolte), a Southern high school teacher, and Susan Lowenstein (Barbra Streisand), a New York psychiatrist, in 'The Prince of Tides'. Copyright Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc.*

especially Kate Nelligan as the Wingos' mother, who dominates the scenes of their strife-ridden childhood on the beautifully photographed South Carolina coast and, later as the kind of mother-in-law and grandmother from whom a family might well run for cover! There is one glorious moment when she serves her griping spouse dog food, which he eats with relish. Another is when the psychiatrist's sneering violinist husband (the splendidly repellent Jeroen Krabbe) gets his comeuppance when Tom holds his Stradivarius over a top floor balcony and threatens to drop it if he doesn't get an immediate apology! This alone, as they say, is almost worth the price of the admission ticket.

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