

Romantic thriller 'Ghost' pulls surprise as summer's first successful dark horse

Ghost
Starring Patrick Swayze, Demi Moore and Whoopi Goldberg
Directed By Jerry Zucker
Rated PG-13

By DON ATKINSON JR.
Of The Battalion Staff

After seeing "Ghost," all I have to say is I'm glad I never bet anyone that Patrick Swayze couldn't act. In this film, Swayze plays Sam Wheat, a yuppie dedicated to his job and his live-in girlfriend, Molly Jensen (Demi Moore). Sam and Molly are a perfect couple: they make love while listening to "Unchained Melody," make love while making clay pots and presumably, intend on making love after seeing "Hamlet."

Unfortunately, fate intervenes. At work, Sam was a little too close to some illegal money-handling and is killed before he and Molly can...well, you know.

For reasons explained later in the film, Sam gets to stick around as a ghost and find out who killed him. Since no one can see or hear him, Sam follows Molly around and even attends his own funeral.

He inadvertently stumbles across a phony psychic, Oda Mae Brown (Whoopi Goldberg), who actually can hear him but not see him. With her help, he is able to finally communicate with Molly.

"Ghost" has been the number one film in the nation for the last two weeks and with good reason. Combining comedy, romance and drama, the film deserves to be the first major blockbuster of the summer season. Aside from being completely original (i.e. not a sequel), "Ghost" is a quality film.

The subject matter may seem more suited to a director like Steven Spielberg, but it's handled well by Jerry Zucker.

Zucker and his brother David, along with Jim Abrahams, are famous for co-directing comedic films such as "The Naked Gun," "Ruthless People" and "Airplane." Now solo

for the first time, he shows a flair for characterization and drama never before seen in his previous works.

"Ghost" also shows a side of Swayze rarely glimpsed in earlier films.

Being dead is a totally new experience for Sam, as I'm sure it would be for all of us, and Swayze conveys his character's discomfort well. Once Sam settles into his new existence, Swayze displays a gift for comic timing with various well-placed funny remarks.

Moore also handles her role well. Molly is the ultimate girlfriend: dedicated, emotional and completely adoring. In less experienced hands, this role would have become a joke. But Moore handles it with remarkable style, managing to add some essential human elements to the character.

Without a doubt, however, Goldberg steals the movie as the phony psychic.

At first, her character seems like nothing but comic relief from the serious storyline, but as the plot continues to unfold, she gets the chance

to show a more serious side.

If it hadn't have been for the excellent chemistry between the three actors, I doubt "Ghost" would have been as good of a film.

As mentioned before, the film is currently out-grossing all others at the box office. I think the reason for this partially has to do with the film's underlying philosophy of death.

In "Ghost," being dead is a tranquil experience. Sam is allowed to stay behind and complete unfinished business, including telling Molly all the things he never got a chance to say when he was alive.

"Ghost" suggests that after death, no one is alone. The bad guys get punished, and the good guys head for their final reward.

Under those terms, dying no longer seems like a terrifying experience.

If you've had your share of disappointments with this summer's crop of movies, "Ghost" is definitely the film to see.

In Advance



Photo by Sondra N. Robbins

Theater arts majors Stephany Tramel, Jonathan Burke (middle) and Steven De Korne star in MSC Dinner Theater's latest production, "Boeing-Boeing."

Aggie Players perform 'Boeing-Boeing'

The MSC Dinner Theater production of "Boeing-Boeing" will begin tonight and continue through Saturday. The Aggie Players will perform the comedy written by Marc Camoletti in Rudder Forum at 8 p.m.

Performances will continue next week, August 2-4.

"Boeing" is the story of a Frenchman, Bernard, who has three fiancées, Janet, Jacqueline and Judith — all are airline stewardesses.

Each woman can visit Bernard two-days-a-week and conveniently, their schedules allow them to visit Bernard at different times. A maid and bachelor friend help Bernard continue the charade.

Bernard faces his toughest challenge, however, when the three fiancées visit him at the same time.

Jon Burke stars as Bernard. Stephany Tramel as Jacqueline, Wendy Young as Judith, and Stacy Noessel as Janet. Dana Smith plays the maid and Stephen De Korne plays Bernard's friend.

"Boeing-Boeing" is directed by Bob Wank.

The dinner portion of the evening will begin at 6 p.m. in the Rudder Exhibit Hall, and a variety of buffets will be served — Italian, Cajun, Texas barbecue and international fare.

Tickets can be purchased at the Rudder Box Office. Prices for the dinner and play are \$15 for students and \$20 for non-students. Tickets for only the play are \$5. For more information call 845-1234.

• TODD STONE

Flood of low-budget releases in home-video market forces new search for entertaining video substitutes

By TODD STONE
and DON ATKINSON JR.
Of The Battalion Staff

For the second week, new video releases have been at best unknown, at worst, pitiful. When "Lobster Man from Mars" is one of your better choices, a visit to the "new release" section of your favorite video store becomes a frustrating experience.

Although the quality video drought continues, there is hope. August will be a good month for video releases. Films such as "Driving Miss Daisy," "Born On The Fourth Of July" and "Revenge" will soon arrive, and lobster movies, soon forgotten.

To help you survive until next month, video spotlight is expanded to offer some entertaining video options.

The Sure Thing

Rated PG

Director Rob Reiner has made a strong name for himself with successful films such as "When Harry Met Sally" and "Princess Bride." But it was his second film, "The Sure Thing," that shot Reiner to the top.

"Sure Thing" (1985) was an important reminder to the movie industry during the early '80s that teenage-exploitive sex films were not the only way to reach the teen and young adult market.

John Cusack (Gib) and Daphne Zuniga (Alison) play two opposites forced together during a trip across the country.

Gib is searching for sex, a sure thing, but discovers he wants true love. Alison realizes her need to escape the entrapments of her stuffy lifestyle and enjoy the freedoms that love can offer.

Reiner develops a gentle sweetness to this film, but it isn't sappy. The characters are well-defined, fun to watch and deftly portrayed. And, there are plenty of laughs throughout the story.

Alison and Gib must deal with the innocent fears of love, and the film shows the awkwardness young people can have with sex. A rare sight in films.

"The Sure Thing" is for the young at heart as much as it is for the young. Certainly, it's one of the better films of the '80s. **Grade: A-**

• T. STONE

Bill Cosby - Himself

Rated PG

Before "The Cosby Show" began its current slide into mediocrity, even before there was such a show, there was "Bill Cosby - Himself" — a film featuring Cosby doing standup comedy live in concert.

With nothing more than a chair for a prop, Cosby makes his witty observations about drinking, family life and dentistry. The film runs a little less than two hours but is spellbinding the whole way through.

As Cosby describes his family, you begin to see the blueprints being laid out for what would later become one of the most popular sitcoms in television history.

A surprising fact about "Bill Cosby - Himself" is the entire film contains only one swear word. Cosby proves that foul-mouthed comics like Eddie Murphy and Andrew Dice Clay are excessively vulgar for no reason. **Grade: B+**

• D. ATKINSON JR.

Blood Simple

Rated R

"Blood Simple" is a chilling, bizarre film from Joel and Ethan Coen, the same two brothers who gave us "Raising Arizona."

"Blood Simple" was their first film and tells the story of a wife, played by Frances McDormand ("Mississippi Burning"), who has left her anal-retentive husband, played by Dan Hedaya (Carla's sleazy spouse on "Cheers"), for another man played by John Getz.

In a fit of jealousy, the husband

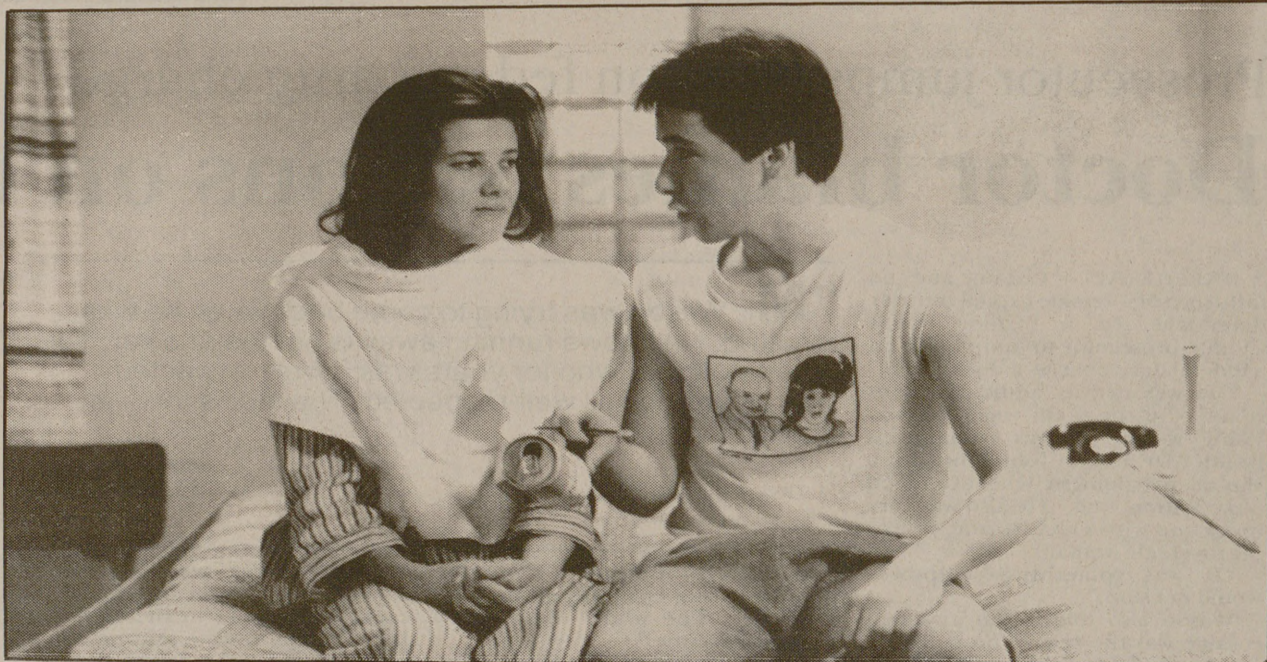
hires a quirky private detective (M. Emmet Walsh) to have the two killed. From that point on, "Blood Simple" resembles an Alfred Hitchcock film more than "Raising Arizona."

Filmed in the Coen's distinctive style with lots of weird camera angles and impossible tracking shots, "Blood Simple" is not a film for viewers with a weak stomach. Certain scenes are nightmarish and violent in nature.

If you're looking for a well-made film that is not your standard video fare, "Blood Simple" will definitely fit the bill. **Grade: B-**

• D. ATKINSON JR.

New Releases:
Valmont, Everybody Wins, Little Sweetheart, Girlfriend From Hell, Lobster Man from Mars, Double Revenge — release date, today.



Battalion File Photo

Daphne Zuniga and John Cusack star in the romantic comedy "The Sure Thing."

Energetic 24-7 Spyz fuses vast ethnic influences, refinement in more accessible 'Gumbo Millennium'

24-7 Spyz
Gumbo Millennium
In Effect

By JOHN RIGHTER
Of The Battalion Staff

A polished, more refined version to last year's *Harder Than You*, *Gumbo Millennium* loses some of the energy and aggression of 24-7 Spyz' debut, but turns out the stronger for it.

Gumbo Millennium is yet another outstanding release in a year strewn with excellence. *Harder Than You* was unfortunately eclipsed by the more accessible *Vivid* (Living Colour), but *Gumbo* makes clear that 24-7 Spyz are destined to be the true Afro-axers of the '90s.

Actually closer to Bad Brains than Living Colour, with a strong hint of George Clinton thrown in, 24-7 Spyz reverberates the Afro mix of reggae and thrash set by the aforementioned Brains.

The thrash influence is less on *Gumbo Millennium*, as the Spyz

really let loose on only four tracks, including the fiery "Racism" and grunge-metalish "New Super Hero Worship."

More often, the Spyzers' (vocalist P. Fluids, guitarist Jimi Hazel, bassist Rick Skatore and drummer/percussionist Anthony Johnson) are quite timid, even recording the catchy "Don't Break My Heart," a ballad by any nature (The band realizes their diversion and classify the song as

ory," a bass-thumping, guitar-wailing instrumental that explodes into "New Super Hero Worship" and the rockin' "Deathstyle," a bleak number about the increasing problems of AIDS, drugs, family violence and inner-city life.

While *Harder Than You* was solely the lyrical work of P. Fluid, *Gumbo Millennium* features songwriting by all four members. The diversity in song styles allows for out-

24-7 Spyz blends almost every possible facet of modern rock into *Gumbo*, including hardcore, metal, rap, soul, funk, rock and reggae.

The depth on side two is astounding, constantly flip-flopping between radio accessibility and avant garde. From the frustrated harmonies of "Valdez 27 Million?" to the diametrically shot "Heaven and Hell" to the spoken-word tribute of "Some Defenders' Memories," side two sizes brief snapshots of the Afro-American influence on American music.

Gumbo listens like a Reader's Digest version of Afro-American music, glossing over minute details, but retaining enough gist to convey the vast impact of performers such as George Clinton, Prince, Bob Marley and Bad Brains on modern music.

Gumbo Millennium is another strong release for 1990. The Spyz' latest sound is more accessible than *Harder*, retaining an Afro-pop-through-the-cheese-grater appeal that should serve as shelter from the convenient and haphazard listener.

Gumbo listens like a Reader's Digest version of Afro-American music, glossing over minute details, but retaining enough gist to convey the vast impact of performers such as George Clinton, Prince, Bob Marley and Bad Brains on modern music — yet another outstanding release in a year strewn with excellence.

"file under cheesy.")

"Don't Break My Heart" is quite a progression for a group that recorded the X-rated and insensitive "Spyz Dope" on their first album.

Gumbo Millennium opens with the cosmic "John Connelly's The-

standing tracks such as Johnson's anthemic "Don't Push Me" (he also does the rapping on it) and Hazel's "Heaven and Hell" and "Don't Break My Heart."

The most enlightening aspect of *Gumbo* is the album's eclecticism.

'Arachnophobia' misleads delivers jolts, not laughs

Arachnophobia
Starring Jeff Daniels
and John Goodman
Directed By Frank Kennedy
Rated PG-13

By TODD STONE
Of The Battalion Staff

The film "Arachnophobia" is like a bread sandwich — you have something on the top and something on the bottom, but not much in the middle.

Advertised as a "thrill-omedy," the filmmakers promise a movie that will make you jump in one scene and laugh in the next.

This concept is a return to the '50's creature films, and it's a good idea. The film "Tremors" successfully used the same laughs-thrills concept with subterranean creatures.

This time, the thrills come from spiders in "Arachnophobia."

In a stirring and visually captivating beginning, an entomologist discovers a new species of spider in a Venezuelan jungle. We soon discover this is no ordinary spider. It kills and kills quickly.

The panoramic scenes during the early part of the film are incredible. Unfortunately, one of the deadly spiders immigrates to a small California town and this begins an hour-long lull in the film.

Not only do the eye-pleasing scenes disappear, but so does a majority of the tension the film generated. The story quickly regresses to a constant repetition of close-calls and spider murders.

Jeff Daniels ("Terms of Endearment") stars as a doctor who moved his family to the spider-ridden town to get away from the pressures of city life.

Unfortunately, the doctor is terrified of your basic daddy-long-legs when he comes across the killers, his worst nightmares come true.

If you are the least bit uncomfortable with spiders, this film cringes and deftly plays on that fear during the middle part of the film over-uses the same devices of close-calls and surprises around the corner. The narrative doesn't develop further until the climax. Then...

Wow! The ending is slick and tense. Director Frank Kennedy packs some action and surprises that should have been used throughout the whole film.

John Goodman ("Always" "Sea Of Love") appears more in previews than he does in the film. The local exterminator Delbert Goodman was supposed to be the film's comic relief, but he had to say and little to do in this film.

Screenwriters Don Jakobson and Wesley Strick come up with only a few giggles, so the comedy part of this film fails. But director Kennedy is able to compensate to some degree with genuine surprises.

Still, anytime you get a quality actor-comedian like Goodman, you should be able to come up with some hilarious scenes. But it never happens in this film.

But if you're looking for a surprise and a chance to see a killer spider, "Arachnophobia" probably satisfies. But don't let "From Stephen Spielberg" label you. It's no Indiana Jones