

# Alien Resurrection brings old series back to life

## Movie Review

*Alien Resurrection*  
Starring Sigourney Weaver and Winona Ryder  
Directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet  
Rated R  
Playing at Post Oak Mall  
★★★★ 1/2 (out of five)



Cloning ... DNA cell cultures ... an alien race pitted against humanity in an attempt to evolve. These are the tidbits and secretive insights given to viewers in the previews and trailers for *Alien Resurrection*. But behind this smokescreen of alien versus human hype, there exists a far better story. Before this sequel, there was *The Alien Trilogy*, a masterpiece collection of science fiction begun in 1979, with sequels in 1986 and 1992. Eighteen years after the inception of *Alien*, Sigourney Weaver returns, reprising the Academy Award nominated role of Lt. Ellen Ripley, Warrant Officer First Class. And she is no longer the Ripley from days of old.

The smartest change in her character is Ripley is no longer Ripley; she is merely a clone of her former self, with a few added extras from alien DNA. Now there is a mystique about Ripley. Is she the same woman who spent two centuries defending the human race from vicious aliens, or has she found new and more accepting bonds of family among chestbursters and facehuggers? That is a question only Ripley can answer.

She is still the tough, no nonsense sci-fi heroine. This time, however, she is not only tough and no nonsense, but sarcastic and funny throughout the film. Her character has become, oddly, more human in being an alien-clone mixture. This new Ripley and film formula is due in large part to the film's director.

First there was Ridley Scott, a director of classics such as *Thelma and Louise*, who brought the timid but willful Ripley to the silver screen. Then James Cameron came along and turned Ripley into an action figure and a role model by displaying her commanding female presence.

And at the end of the trilogy, David Fincher, in his first widescreen production before the success of *Seven*, presented the film's followers with a weakened and scared Ripley, awaiting her eventual demise by an implanted alien.

This time around, the eclectically dark and picturesque Jean-Pierre Jeunet, director of the visually stunning *The City of Lost Children*, takes everything from Ripley's past lives and molds them into her scientifically generated body.

She is strong, innocent, crafty and suscepti-

ble to 360-degree changes in her beliefs and faith toward both humans and aliens.

This is the search in the fourth installment of the *Alien* series — finding self-purpose and defining the true meaning of the human condition, no matter how alien it may seem on the surface.

Thought-provoking and classic science fiction are the only two ways to convey the message *Alien Resurrection* delivers.

It represents a tribute to great works of science fiction. The character of Ellen Ripley and the perseverance of an actress such as

Sigourney Weaver portrays someone of so many inner battles with the simple purpose of keeping the world interesting.

Hopes are high now that Ripley has returned, and expectations surely are raised. But with a strong trilogy backing their experiences, the meek warrant officer, the super-

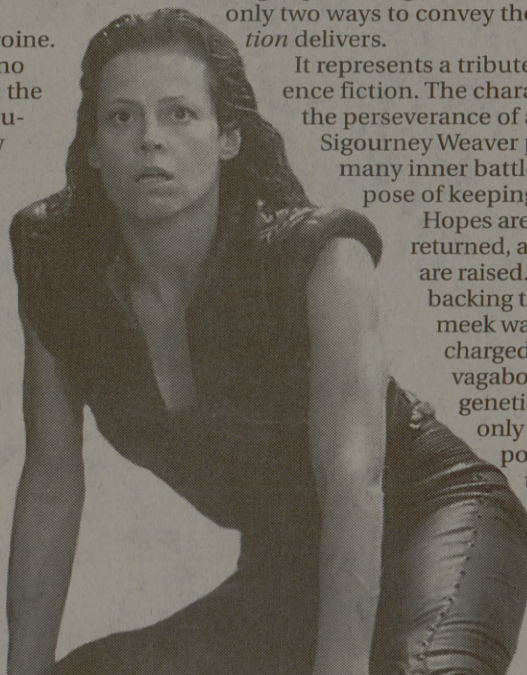
charged action hero, the terrified vagabond traveler and the new genetic secret operative have

only the future to discover possibly a fifth edition to

their ranks. And the next time, it can be assured another *Alien* sequel

only would add more depth to a film's history spanning the galaxy.

— By James Francis



# Williams' Flubber fails to recapture magic and charm of original

## Movie Review

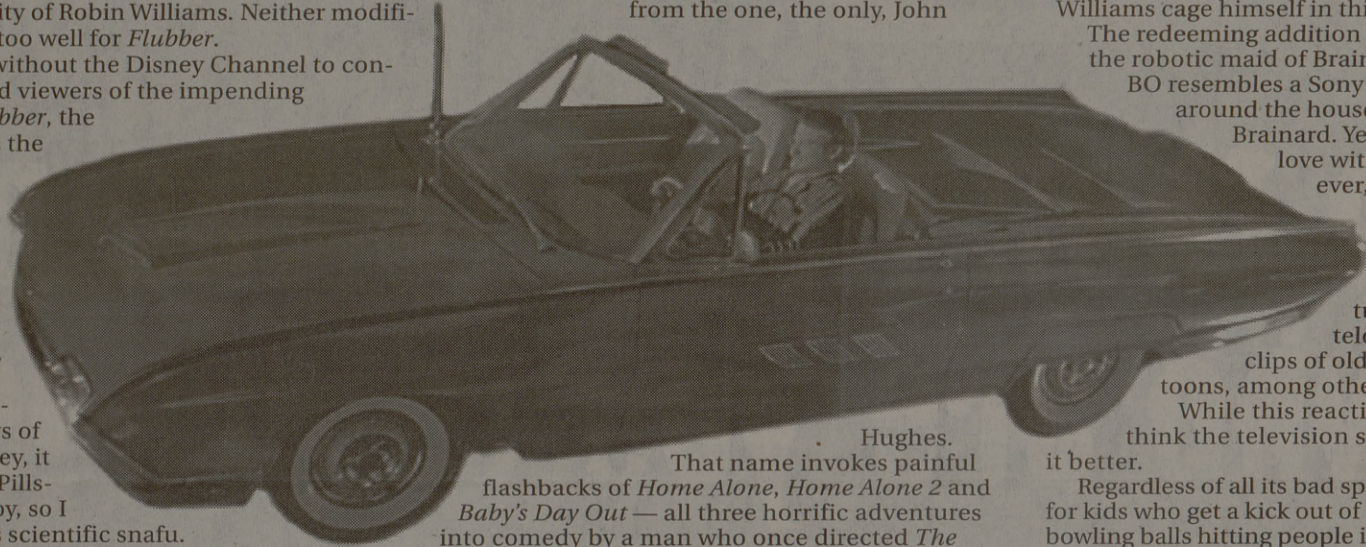
*Flubber*  
Starring Robin Williams  
Directed by Les Mayfield  
Rated PG  
Playing at Hollywood 16  
★★ 1/2 (out of five)

The marketing gurus at Disney have done it again. They have hyped a movie to the point where anything less than a religious experience is a disappointment. Too bad Robin Williams' new flick *Flubber* would have been a disappointment with or without the marketing juggernaut that consisted of an endless supply of mouse pads, pens, post cards and some strange-smelling goo that left glitter on hands. *Flubber* is a remake of the 1961 film *The Absent-Minded Professor*. The original was funny with a

campy '60s feel that makes it fun even for modern audiences. The updated version, however, ditches the campiness for computer graphics and replaces the stoic likeability of Fred McMurray with the unbridled insanity of Robin Williams. Neither modification works too well for *Flubber*.

For those without the Disney Channel to constantly remind viewers of the impending release of *Flubber*, the movie follows the amnesiac Professor Phillip Brainard, played by Williams. Brainard invents *Flubber*, a gooey substance that defies all the laws of physics. But hey, it looks like the Pillsbury Doughboy, so I will forget this scientific snafu. *Flubber* is a mindless offering to people in Congress screaming for "family movies." Very little original thought has been put into this re-

make, but people will not care, because the kids will laugh and millions of dollars will be made. To key people in on how clichéd *Flubber* really is, just look at the screenplay credit. It comes from the one, the only, John



Hughes. That name invokes painful flashbacks of *Home Alone*, *Home Alone 2* and *Baby's Day Out* — all three horrific adventures into comedy by a man who once directed *The Breakfast Club*. One can only hope Alex Linz, the star of the upcoming *Home Alone 3*, can escape from the clutches

of Hughes with his tiny sense of self-worth intact. Robin Williams' talent is wasted as Professor Brainard. Perhaps it is just marriage of an actor with a role, but it is almost painful to watch Williams cage himself in this truly humorless role. The redeeming addition to the movie is WEEBO, the robotic maid of Brainard's household. WEEBO resembles a Sony Walkman rewired to fly around the house and fawn over Brainard. Yes, WEEBO is in robotic love with the professor. However, even WEEBO turns into an advertisement for Disney. Ever couple of minutes, the camera turns to WEEBO's little television screen to see clips of old Donald Duck cartoons, among other things.

While this reactionary device is cute, I think the television series "Dream On" did it better.

Regardless of all its bad spots, *Flubber* can be fun for kids who get a kick out of banana peel slips and bowling balls hitting people in the head.

Otherwise, *Flubber*, both the movie and the goo, have the zingy appeal of hair gel and little else.

— By Aaron Meier

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