

Small Soldier Review

Information on this film indicates that the script was discovered and picked for filming by Steven Spielberg. No better Director could have been chosen than the master of the offbeat and unusual, Joe Dante. His previous works included the Gremlin films, Explorers and Innerspace. Gremlins was full of offbeat humor, wierd surprises and fun and was one of the best films of the '80's. This film gives Dante a chance to do Gremlins over again with even better technical support than before. There are plenty of references to Gremlins in this film beginning with the computer code name. (See if you notice it).

While the script doesn't offer the surprises Gremlin kept springing on the audience, it makes up for it in sheer cleverness. Even though the Soldiers are the bad guys, you have to admire their sheer American persistence and ability to keep coming back when knocked down. The special effects supporting the SS's is nothing less than astonishing. Despite the fact that some of it is less than HIGH TECH (see the post production article elsewhere in this issue) Dante's directorial wizardry brings the whole show together in one nifty visual spectacle. Pay close attention to the SS's and you will find even the voices are a Hollywood Who's-Who. Dante contacted cast members of the classic "Dirty Dozen" and obtained the participation of George Kennedy, Ernest Borgnine, Clint Walker and Jim Brown, augmented by the voice of Bruce Dern, to speak for the little guys. (Along with Tommy Lee Jones, that's three Oscar winners speaking for the little guys).

And, if the film is not successful with adults it has a barrage of SS tie-ins designed to suck in the kids. See the web sites at Universal Studios or Hasbro Toys for a sample of what's waiting out there to entice every 8 to 13 year old boy and a few macho gals along the way. A warning for adults: This film could be really scary for younger kids. Besides some not too polite language there is also a nightmarish Bride of Frankenstein scene where the SS's do some not so nice scientific experiments on Gwendy Dolls (Barbie look-a-likes) and turn them into a scary attack group. Kept me awake all night.

Except for that, everybody can have some fun with this one. Film buffs will find references to all kinds of movies and almost every war movie ever

made is given a nod. Some of the lines are clever but will sail right by the kids. Adults will get some chuckles. Oddly, this film appears to have been modified right to its release date. Having seen the ending on the 5th of last month replayed several times, I find that the two final scenes have been recut to exclude lines and change the emphasis of the action. Also the last line, which was pretty good has been replaced with one that is a humdinger and pertinent to one other very big film. Since I'm not giving anything away I can tell you the original last line was "Archer, are we there yet?" If you want to know what the replacement was, you'll have to go and find out for yourself. I wouldn't want these little guys upset with me. Neither will you.

Rated 3 out of 4 computer Chip(s) Hazard