

'Gremlins' just 'too gross to be funny'



Photo Courtesy Warner Bros. Inc.

Zach Galligan and Phoebe Cates, two stars in "Gremlins."

By Lisa Renner

Sitting through "Gremlins" is like watching two hours of a perverted Muppet show. This movie is a little too cute to be scary, and just too gross to be funny.

Like "ET," "Gremlins" is loaded with special effects and centers on a relationship between boy and his creature. Steven Spielberg attempts to combine humor, suspense and the mystical. It's not only that Spielberg bit off more than he could chew, he just does it with his mouth wide open.

There's just something about ugly green little monsters destroying a town that doesn't strike me as funny. The audience is asked to believe that this really is humor, and there were a lot of people laughing. In fact, I may have been the only person that wasn't. Had I lost my sense of humor? It wasn't until I was walking home that it hit me. "Gosh...gross mutilation and murder really are funny, I must just have been in a bad mood."

The movie begins with Rand Peltzer in Chinatown searching for the perfect Christmas gift for his son Billy. Peltzer is an unsuccessful inventor with a gadget for every occasion. To make a long movie short, Peltzer more or less steals a Mogwai (later named Gizmo) and returns home in time for Christmas. Hoyt Axton plays Peltzer, and his off-beat humor is genuinely funny. It's too bad the audience doesn't get to see more of him.

Everything is going along fine with Billy and his new pet until Billy breaks the explicit rules for caring for his little friend. First, Billy accidentally gets him wet. As a result Gizmo (the Gremlin) reproduces bunches of other little fuzzy

things that are almost identical to the original Mogwai except for the evil, mischievous look in their eyes. Later they all turn into horrible monsters (all but Gizmo) because they accidentally got fed after midnight.

This is where the fun begins! Gremlins multiply and take over the town, murdering and destroying everything in their path. But don't think that the helpless humans don't have their moments of glory. They seem to enjoy eliminating the Gremlins in torturous ways almost as much as the gremlins enjoy killing humans.

Perhaps even more offensive than all the violence is Spielberg's preachy, moralistic spiel at the end of the movie. The wise prophet makes a surprise visit to take the Mogwai back where he belongs. He tells the Peltzer family that America is not yet ready or able to bear responsibility, that in affect we misuse, abuse and exploit nature and its innocence. Well, it was just a little too hokey to make any kind of real political statement.

If the makers of "Grem'ins" were so conscious about exploitation, why didn't they take into consideration their viewers? You can bet that little kids all over have been saving their money (probably since the last time they saw ET) to see "Gremlins." Not to mention buying T-shirts, dolls and even gooey green Gremlin toothpaste. So while Spielberg sits back and makes money, kids are learning that mutilation is funny, and that murder and violence is all right and funny too. Thanks a lot, Steve.

The prophet from the Orient should have said, "He who spends \$3.50 on "Gremlins" must have yen for bad movies."

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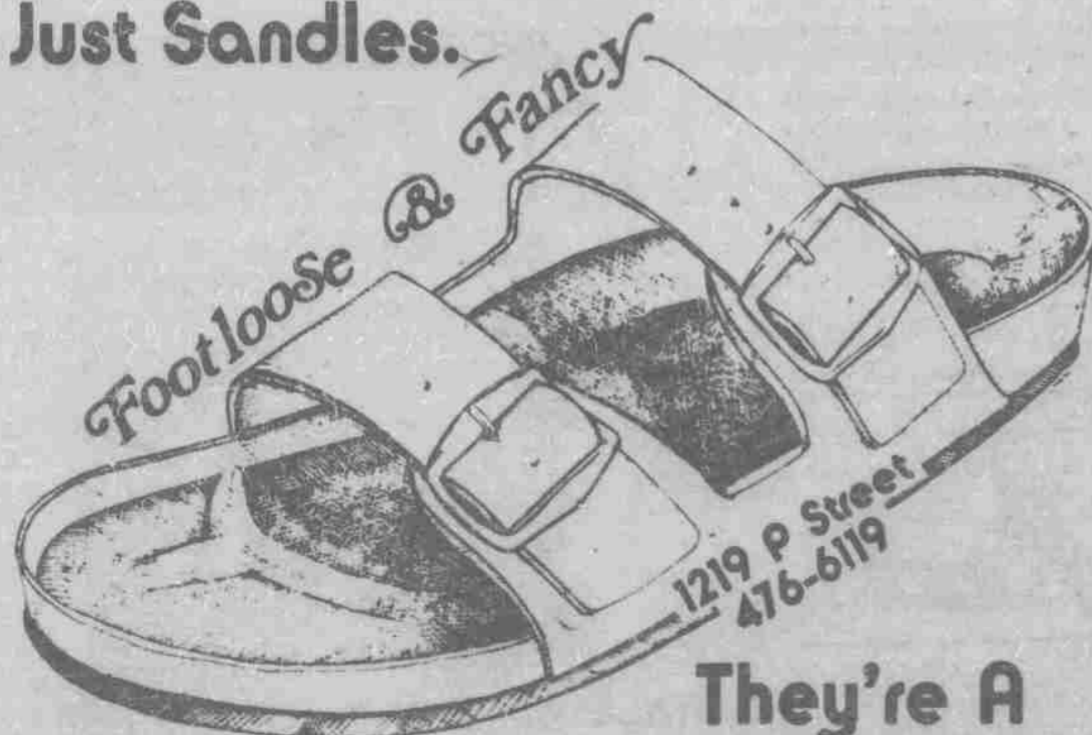
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Shorts

Three guided public tours will be offered at the Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha during July. The tours will cover different aspects of the museum's temporary exhibitions and permanent collections.

The tours include: "Artists By Themselves: Artists' Portraits from the National Academy of Design" on July 11; "A Highlight Tour of the Joslyn's Permanent Collections" on July 18; and "Artists by Themselves..." once more on July 25.

Each of the tours will begin at 1 p.m. in the East Foyer. The tours are free with regular museum admission of \$2 for adults and \$1 for senior citizens and children under 12 years of age.

John Brownlee, a native of Lincoln and a 1969 UNL graduate, has been named manager of corporate employment for Walt Disney Productions.

In the new position, Brownlee will coordinate overall employment and recruiting policies throughout the corporation. In addition, he will continue to be responsible for all Walt Disney World employment.

The Omaha World-Herald has pledged up to \$50,000 to the Nebraska ETV Network's \$2 million campaign to replace and maintain aging television production equipment and establish a humanities program endowment. The World-Herald invited the state's radio and television stations to match the newspaper's "challenge pledge."

The World-Herald will match the contributions of the three Omaha-based commercial television stations up to a total of \$30,000 and the contributions of all other Nebraska television and radio stations up to a total of \$20,000.

YUKS by Billy Shaffer

Cheap Campaign Tricks (#43)

Ronald Reagan breakdancing in Harlow, July 3, 1984