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GHOSTBUSTER

ERNIE HUDSON

THE LAST STARFIGHTER

LANCE GUEST

The Neverending Story

NOAH HATHAWAY

BUCKAROO BANZAI

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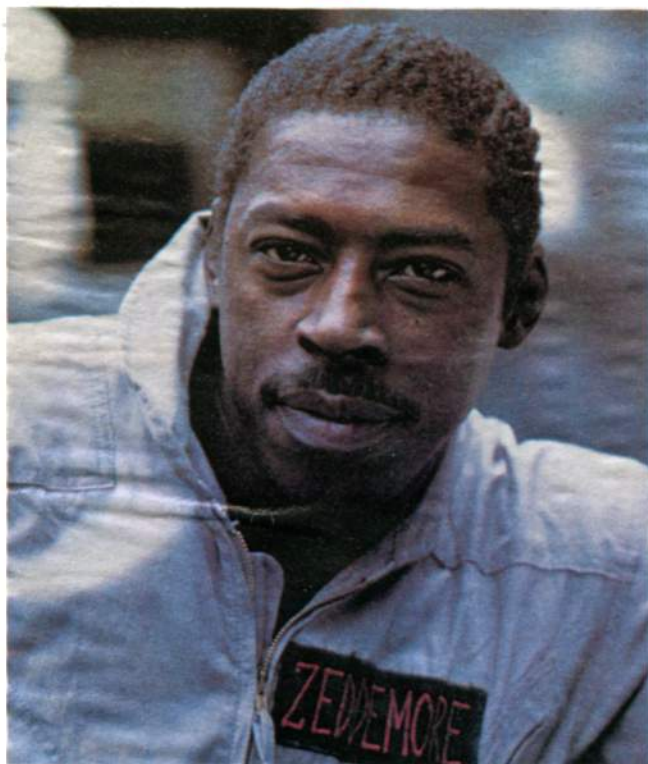
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GH**OST**BUSTERS



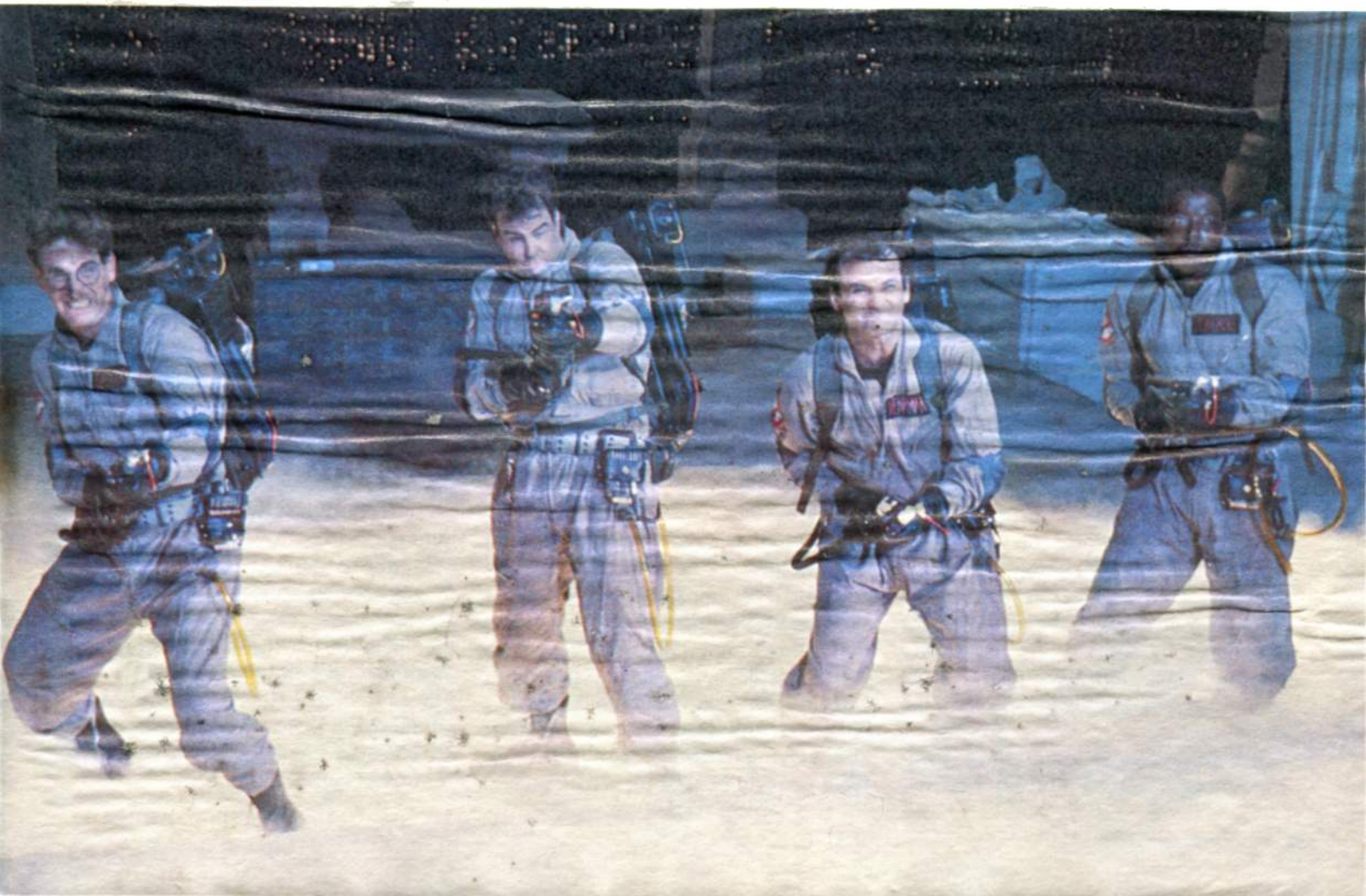
From box office flop Spacehunter to America's favorite film

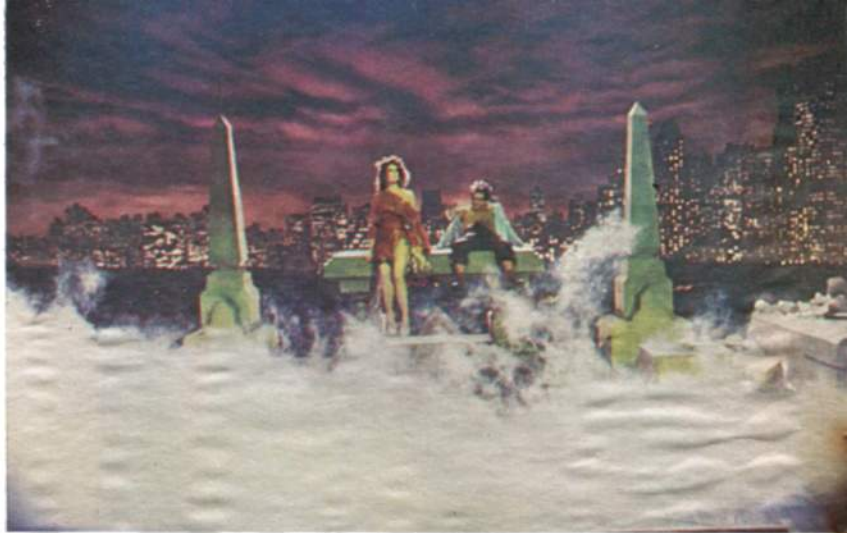
ERNIE HUDSON

**braves ghosts,
goblins and ghoullies.**

(Top) Ernie Hudson. (Below L-R) Harold Ramis, Dan Aykroyd, Bill Murray and Ernie Hudson prepare to do battle with the spirit Gozer.
© Columbia Pictures

By James Van Hise





The world has been rescued from a lot of menaces in motion pictures over the years. From invaders from Mars to invaders from less foreign shores—but ghosts?

Ghosts, goblins, ghoulies and things in more elaborate form have begun enjoying a resurgence in recent years. Steven Spielberg's *Poltergeist* is a prime example.

"The way the ghosts are presented through special effects can probably be compared to *Poltergeist*. I don't know of anything else quite like it. We build up to a certain point where it's almost the end of the world," Ernie Hudson explained. In a world of rampaging spirits and those self-appointed to pursue them, Hudson plays Winston. He is the fourth member of the team and the man hired by them to act as security for the team. Winston seems more capable of tackling the bizarre than the commonplace.

Ghostbusters is about three parapsychologists played by Bill Murray,

(Left) The being Gozer manifests itself in the form of a bizarre female (Shatner's Joan). (Top Right) Gate Keeper Sigourney Weaver and Key Master Rick Moranis await the coming of Gozer. (Bottom Right) A terror dog crashes the party. ©Columbia Pictures.

Dan Aykroyd and Harold Ramis. The three have just lost their research grant with N.Y.U. Since they are the only ones who recognize that New York City is being plagued by increasing numbers of paranormal occurrences, they found their own business—"Ghostbusters".

"I'm hired as a security expert as well as an expert at demolition," Hudson explained. "It's a dangerous job and I serve as the backup and I have to cover the other guys. My character is probably the most realistic principal. Harold Ramis plays an egghead kind of character and Danny is very serious about trying to prove that ghosts exist. It's a comedy but it's played seriously.

It's not played up for laughs even though it's very funny."

TERROR DOGS AND EXTRA-DIMENSIONAL REFRIGERATORS

"What I enjoy about the script," Hudson continued, "is that it's one of those shows where we go into a home or a church or whatever and capture those ghosts. In the beginning it's just the three doctors, but then they hire my character and we all go out and hunt ghosts."

But ghosts aren't all they find. In fact they encounter so many menaces that are not ghosts or spirits of the dead that the title of the film is almost a misnomer. It's the same way that the title of *Poltergeist* in no way hinted at all the startling manifestations of other dimensional existence which were encountered in that film.



(Left) Bill Murray saves the damsel in distress, Sigourney Weaver. (Right) Ernie Hudson. (Bottom) Harold Ramis as Dr. Egon Spengler is the brains of Ghostbusters. ©Columbia Pictures

their part."

In the story as originally conceived by Dan Aykroyd, the science fiction element was so overwhelming that the director said that it would have cost \$200 million to make. Later drafts honed the story and refocused it. But one of the elements retained was the Stay-Puft man. This giant marshmallow creature is actually the real menace that is threatening the world and is the pivotal element in the climax.

In a film like *Ghostbusters*, which can only be described as a special effects fest, a lot of demands are made on the performers. Reacting to important elements in a scene when all they have to go by is their imagination requires more than just careful acting and directing. "I think that the thing is in trusting other people," Hudson explained. "As an actor working on a show, you have to trust everybody else in doing their part when you're doing a film that depends so much on special effects. You just do your own part. You know that, okay, this is the scene where the earth opens up. This is the scene where the sky is opening up. And up there is a voice like God roaring out over everything. You have to do your part and trust in the special effects crew to do theirs."

CREATIVE COMEDY

Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd and Harold Ramis have carved out a very special comic niche for themselves in films today. Working with them could only be an experience in creativity.

"It's interesting watching someone who came from a background of improvisational techniques," Hudson explained. "That's because they're not really comedians but comic performers. I'm used to structure so the spontaneity and sense of freedom was very strange for me in the beginning. I'm used to someone saying that the script says this and you stand here and this is how it works. It was actually really nice to work with someone where you really didn't know which direction they were going to go in. If we did a scene several times, Bill Murray would give many different reactions and come from different places. Danny is not as spontaneous as Bill but he's just as creative, but in different ways. He's funny in a very stylish kind of way that's all his own. I had a lot of scenes with Danny which were one-on-one. It was a good learning experience."

That learning experience included seeing Dan Aykroyd and Harold Ramis continuing to tinker and improvise with the script they had written even while they were filming.

"I consider myself a writer and I understand how it takes a long time to put it down on paper. I spend a lot of time just getting it right," Hudson explained. "But watching them, I saw that they weren't as possessive with their writing as I know that I would have been. This is because they understand the form and that if something doesn't work, they'll do what does work. They're very open to ideas."

"I think that the key is that they're friends and that they spend a lot of time together just on the social level.

One of their encounters involves man-eating Terror Dogs from another dimension. These are accomplished largely through traditional stop-motion animation although there was also a full-sized Terror Dog suit with a performer inside. The latter was only used briefly in close-ups for convincing scenes involving actors.

A call to the apartment of a character played by Sigourney Weaver results in them finding a gateway to another dimension inside her refrigerator! In this film, the outlandish becomes commonplace.

"For instance, there's a scene where a guy transforms into a giant marshmallow that's a hundred feet tall," said Hudson. "But you have to react to just something that you can imagine when you play the scene. There's many scenes where we're just dealing one-on-one with ghosts that aren't there. So you have to use your imagination and trust to the special effects crew to do

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(Left) The Key Master and Gate Keeper await the coming of an ancient spirit. (Above L-R) Harold Ramis, Dan Aykroyd, Billy Murray and Ernie Hudson prepare to do battle with a god. ©Columbia Pictures

They really have an incredible amount of respect for each other. When I came in, all those guys had known each other and worked together before. But I was the outsider coming in, and yet I wasn't treated that way. I talked with Bill Murray about this and he said that he respected each person there as much as he did his own self. He said that you have to know that they're equally as good in their own right as you are."

Ernie Hudson found this concept reinforced when he attended a session in which some of the music written for the film by Elmer Bernstein was being recorded. Bernstein has scored most of Ivan Reitman's films.

"I went to a scoring of *Ghostbusters* and I was really blown away by it. There were about a hundred musicians there. When I saw all of those musicians I was really impressed by how much actually goes into a film. It's a bigger process than I think I ever realized before then. We actors sometimes get a little self-centered and forget all the people who work to make the entire film succeed."

REMEMBERING SPACEHUNTER

I'd last seen Ernie Hudson in the wilds of Utah when he was toiling in the sup-

porting role in the film *Spacehunter: Adventures In The Forbidden Zone*. We'd talked at the time about how happy he was with the role since black characters had not been featured very prominently or positively in science fiction films in recent years. Everyone had hoped for the best on the film, but hope had not been enough. While he had done other work since then, including a film with John Candy, he still recalled how let down he felt when *Spacehunter* came out.

"I was disappointed. Not from the point of view that it just didn't do well at the box office, but how the film turned out as a whole. Sometimes a film just doesn't gel and I'm not sure what happens then. A lot of it had to do with the 3-D special effects. When I went into it I was told that this was a whole new revolutionary process and I was very excited by it. I always thought that 3-D could work well but that it just hadn't quite been developed properly yet. But then I thought, well, this is the one that will do it and I'll have been a part of it.

"I'm not sorry that I did the film," he continued. "Not at all. It just didn't turn out the way that I and a lot of other people thought that it would. Working with Peter Strauss and

Lamont Johnson was a good learning experience, though.

"Actually, watching *Spacehunter* later on a videotape of it where I could see it flat, I enjoyed it much better. It plays much better that way. I think that the 3-D took a lot away and was very distracting. In 3-D it was very dark. But when I saw it flat it was much brighter. You take your chances on things like this and sometimes they don't pan out."

Ghostbusters looks to be something altogether different for Ernie Hudson. After completing that film he made a television pilot with Dee Wallace (the mom in *E.T.*) and he's just waiting to see how each project takes off.

While not his first comedy, *Ghostbusters* is different in that the humor comes out of the situations. The performers play it straight. Only one ghost in the entire film actually even looks funny. Hudson found it very enjoyable.

"One of the nicest things about working in it was working for director Ivan Reitman. This is a film I'm really looking forward to."

From the reactions of audiences: so it seems is America.

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