

**Movie Review**

**Arachnophobia spins chilling web**

By DIAHANN NADEAU  
Herald Special

Even if you like spiders (and I counted myself among those people), Arachnophobia will chill you to your toes. And if you are scared of them to begin with - well, this

film might just do you in. A funny horror movie, Arachnophobia is by turns terrifying and laughable - although the emphasis is more on fear than comedy.

Jeff Daniels plays Dr. Ross Jennings, a Yale graduate who moves to a small California town to take

over a retiring doctor's practice. Unfortunately a killer spider from Venezuela has arrived at the same time and pretty soon some very suspicious deaths are taking place. Jennings starts tracking the cause down, but he is afflicted by severe arachnophobia, which is not the kind of thing you want when dealing with monster arachnids from some primeval valley.

On the way he is aided by the fearless ('I'm bad'), Delbert McClintock (John Goodman), the local exterminator, and the coldly intelligent (yet sexy) Dr. Atherton (Julian Sands), a spider expert who was on the expedition that brought the culprit bug to the U.S. in the first place. Will our fearful doctor conquer the killers before they conquer him? As the town's death toll mounts, you begin to wonder. A satisfyingly scary climax left this reviewer on the edge of her seat.

Arachnophobia is not as good as the other comedy-terror movie from earlier this year, Tremors. The comedy isn't as obvious, as funny. John Goodman is meant to provide a lot of the laughs, but he doesn't seem to have enough screen time and despite his large presence appears a little subdued. Jeff Daniels is very good though, and he tells the picture together well. Harley Jane Kozak plays the down-to-earth wife, and Mark Taylor is the unlucky photographer whose death leads to the invasion of the town. The movie comes from Amblin Entertainment, Steven Spielberg's production company. (He is the executive producer.)

Arachnophobia is a fun film, and should be taken in the spirit intended - go in prepared to be a little scared, and you should enjoy yourself. And the next time you see a spider heading down your wall, you might just let your heart skip a beat.

**Video cassettes family darlings**

OTTAWA - The video cassette recorder, offspring of the high-tech age, has become the darling of family entertainment. And it's slowly strangling a progenitor, the cinema.

A peek at family spending through much of the 1980s shows the startling growth in video technology caused a major shift in consumer preferences. In the fight for leisure-time dollars, the video recorder and film cassette are the winners. The cinema is the big loser.

As the decade drew to a close, Canadian families reported spending more money on VCR purchases and tape rentals than in movie theatres, according to a Statistics Canada review of expenditures on culture. By 1988, more than half of all households had a VCR. Four years earlier, only 12 per cent of homes had one of these machines.

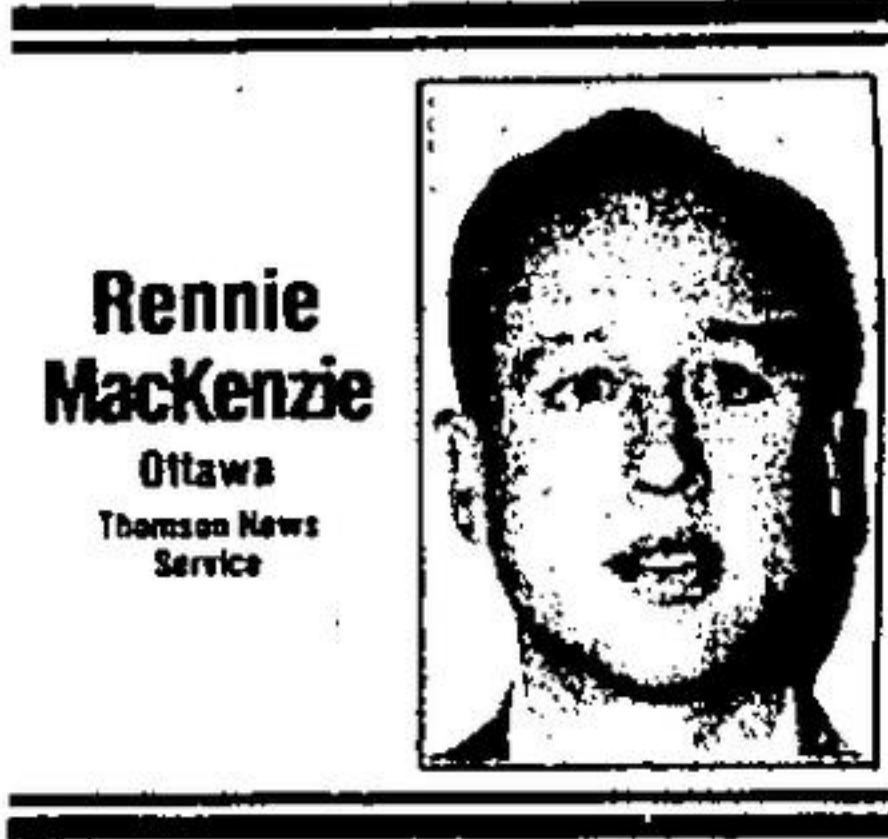
The effect on the cinema has been dramatic. From the late 1970s to the mid-80s, family spending at movie houses plunged 28 per cent. Even families who reported going out to movies cut their average spending by almost 20 per cent. In New Brunswick, family spending on videotape rentals in 1986 was more than double the expenditure on tickets to the movies.

The burst in home entertainment spending surprised some analysts at Statistics Canada, but not a Carleton University film expert, Prof. Peter Harcourt, who has observed the trend "with a heavy heart."

"We're all giving up cinema because it's 7 1/2 bucks to see some crappy film, badly projected. Some screens aren't that big and your feet are stuck on somebody else's Coca-Cola," he commented.

Sticky pop on the soles of theatre-goers will offend many, but within the soul of the industry, there are other problems, Harcourt explained.

"The old art of the cinema has really been killed by television," he said. Films are far less personal and more appear to be made for television. Unlike the "beautifully stylish old westerns," the action and "talking head" films of today



Rennie MacKenzie  
Ottawa Thomson News Service

look just as good on the small screen, he added.

"There's very little personal style any more. There's not the same reason to go (to the cinema)."

Harcourt also noted the wide variety of films now available to video viewers and the improved quality and lower prices of home entertainment equipment. And video gear has a technical advantage with its ability to fast-forward or slow on-screen action and to play back portions of films, he said.

"Young people, especially, like to see the good bits over again."

But if video is vanquishing the cinema, it appears, as yet, to be offering no challenge to the performing arts. Over the same period, spending on plays and live concerts jumped 56 per cent.

Statistics Canada officials are cautious in their approach to the data drawn from their various cultural surveys. However, the conclusion that more families are spending more on the performing arts is inescapable.

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