

The waiting is the hardest part

BY MICHAEL GILTZ

The summer is half over and Hollywood is still waiting for a run-away blockbuster or surprise hit to catch audiences — and them — by surprise. Big-ticket items such as *Total Recall* and *Days of Thunder* have to gross \$100 million just to remain respectable. But a number of upcoming movies could do just as well and be considered great successes.

The just-released *Ghost* is a prime candidate for unexpected box-office action. It's peopled by three B-grade movie stars: Demi Moore, Whoopi Goldberg and Patrick Swayze, who's considered a fluke and hasn't proven anyone wrong with *Roadhouse* and *Next Of Kin*. But there's enough of an industry and audience buzz around this mystery/comedy/supernatural-romance to turn it into a hit.

Several other films — such as *Arachnophobia* and *Problem Child* hope to follow in its footsteps. The following is a rundown of movies scheduled for release in the next six weeks and their chances of doing big business. Remember, all dates are subject to change.



RALPH NELSON

Arachnophobia

It's backed by Steven Spielberg, and the trailer looks good. Prepare to be scared.

Steve Martin stars as a tacky FBI informant who gets transplanted by the Witness Protection Program to suburbia in *My Blue Heaven*. He has to deal with a nebbish government contact (Rick Moranis) and white-bread America. Screenwriter Nora Ephron (*When Harry Met Sally . . .*) is hot, and Martin is always funny. Should do good, but not great, business.

Charlie Sheen stars in *Naval Seals*, an action flick about an elite naval combat and rescue team. He must have the same agent as Nicholas Cage, who appeared in the *Top Gun*-like clinker *Fire Birds* earlier this summer. *Seals* should sink without a trace.

JULY 25-27: *Presumed Innocent*: Harrison



WARNER BROS.

Presumed Innocent

Edge. Everyone wants to see this movie and everyone will. Guaranteed blockbuster.

Problem Child, a dark comedy about a cute, little adopted boy who wreaks havoc, is being touted as a come-back for star John Ritter. He's playing along—even pretending in interviews that the young actor who



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Med students experiment with stopping each



COLUMBIA

Flatliners

cial projects and the cast is top-loaded with pretty woman Julia Roberts and Kiefer Sutherland. The long trailer is also a doozy, so look for this one to score strongly.

AUGUST 3: Spike Lee's highly anticipated *Mo' Better Blues* looks at the jazz world in the form of a drama starring Denzel Washington. Every one of Lee's films has had a bigger budget and has done better at the box office than the one before it. This will be no exception.

Ducktales: The Movie is a spin-off from the wildly successful syndicated show. Scrooge McDuck and his nephews go searching for buried treasure, but only the kiddies and their parents will tag along.



DAVID LEE

Mo' Better Blues

AUGUST 10: The much-delayed sequel to *Chinatown* will finally see the light of day when *The Two Jakes* premieres next month. Jack Nicholson returns as Jake Gittes and even directs. It's release date has been changed so often that the movie is probably not the winner Paramount was hoping for. Remember, screenwriter Robert Towne is brilliant,

but he *did* write the screenplay for *Days of Thunder*.

Another darkhorse is *Darkman*, set to be released sometime in mid-August. It's a *Phantom of the Opera*-type thriller that is getting a big push from Universal.

Also look for *Graffiti Bridge*, Prince's sequel to *Purple Rain* and *Men At Work*, another clinker starring Charlie Sheen. This one's about two garbage men who



MELINDA SUE GORDON

Darkman

discover a dead body.

Finally, we can all look forward to *The Freshman*, a comedy starring Matthew Broderick about a film school student who gets a job working for Mafia don Marlon Brando. Brando disowned the picture shortly after it wrapped and publicly claimed he was retiring for good, but hated to end with a stinker. He later changed his mind and said that *The Freshman* is obviously a fine film and "contains moments of high comedy that will be remembered for decades to



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JULY 25-27: Presumed Innocent: Harrison Ford stars in this court-room thriller based on the best-selling novel by Scott Turow. It has an all-star cast and a climactic ending, a la Jagged



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UNIVERSAL

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TRI-STAR

The Freshman