

# 'Pet Sematary:' a ghoulish treat for King fans

By GUNNEVERE ROSS  
Staff Writer

I love Stephen King.

As an avid reader of Stephen King thrillers, I seized the opportunity to review *Pet Sematary*, the latest movie based on one of his novels, a spooky story about pets who come back to life. What I didn't know was that I was about to witness the true King style on the screen.

I am also one of the few King fans who have not read this novel. But that's OK. I wanted to see it because I knew I had a certain immunity to horror movies. In the past, I have discovered that real life is the only thing that keeps me from sleeping at night. So, I decided I could objectively judge the merits of this movie as a pure horror flick.

But be warned. I am very biased when it comes to King.

Like a lot of King horror stories, this tale features an all-American family. In this case, it is the Creeds, who have recently moved into their dream house in the country. No, the house is not haunted, but it might as well be. Not only do they live near ex-Munster Fred Gwynne, but a path in their back yard leads right to — you guessed it — a burial ground for pets.

And like all those other gory King novels, although the family is constantly warned about their fates, almost all of them end up mutilated. They should have gotten the hint when Gwynne told the family that the cemetery — spelled "sematary" on the sign — is the place "where the dead speak."

That would have been enough for me. I don't want to hear any dead thing talk to me, be it Spot, Fluffy or any one of the numerous goldfish that I have unsuccessfully kept.

But Dr. Creed and his family receive other warnings. One of the dead actually does speak to the doctor — a patient who has been crushed by a giant truck. He tells Creed not to go over the barrier behind the cemetery. No problem, I'd tell him. The place gives me the creeps anyway.

Obviously, these warnings do no good. I won't tell you much more

about this thriller, except that Creed ends up going over the barrier into a place "where the dead walk." Of course, it would have been a boring movie if the family had been smart and just kept to itself.

If they had stayed to themselves, they would have saved the family a whole lot of strife, though. Like I said, it takes a really curious, stupid kind of folk to make really good and scary things happen.

King's characters, especially in "Pet," make the story work because they can seem like your next door neighbor. Slowly, you get to know them and eventually begin to share their desperation and terror. Even though you know it's "just a movie," you find yourself pleading with them to heed those warnings, and you scream when they scream.

The movie has an almost perfect balance of suspense and gore. During the last show Sunday night, the audience was simultaneously spooked several times. I might add this is the same audience I thought would never settle down during the previews. But an especially intense part of the film finally grabbed their attention. I felt the floor vibrate as all my neighbors jolted at the same time.

For those of you who live for horror movies that emphasize blood spewing out of bodies, living and dead, you won't be too disappointed. I can promise you at least two really violent parts, where the dead are seeking revenge among the living. It's not

as gross as, say, the "Friday the 13th" saga, but it has its moments.

For example, the dead guy who warns Creed about the deadly barrier walks around with a huge gash in his head, and I think you can even see brains. Besides this one attractive trait, this walking corpse is a beautiful shade of blue, has milky-white eyes and keeps an insane grin on his face.

Another part that even turned

my stomach was another of the walking dead who was having a hard time keeping fluid from coming out of its eye. Good enough for you?

If you saw "Firestarter," another novel written by King and made into a movie, you might be led to believe my loyalty to King has hindered my ability to give this review — or maybe blinded me. Once again, I haven't read the book

about the kid who could burn down buildings in a single thought, but I did see the movie. In many opinions, "Firestarter" the novel failed as a movie. One would be better off reading the book.

But if the written version of "Pet Sematary" is better than the visual, I highly suggest you read it in a well-lit, crowded room. And you might want to keep an eye on Spot.



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