

Fletch Lives ★★

Year of Release: 1989

Review by Randy Parker

Country: USA

Verdict: Skip It

In *Fletch Lives*, everybody's favorite investigative reporter is back in action, but unfortunately he's neither better than ever nor new and improved. *Fletch Lives* is a disappointing sequel to the 1985 hit comedy *Fletch*, which was a surprisingly engaging Chevy Chase vehicle. With Chase returning in the role of Fletch and with Michael Ritchie serving once again as director, I had hoped that *Fletch Lives* would be better than the average sequel. I should have known better. *Fletch Lives* pales in comparison to the original; someone should have put this sequel out of its misery.

After his dismal outing in so-called *Funny Farm*, you'd think that for the sake of his career, Chase would have learned to avoid the country-side. But no, in *Fletch Lives* he inherits a mansion in Louisiana, which gives him an excuse to quit his crummy job at the paper, pack his chest, and move to the mid-west. In Louisiana, Fletch immediately becomes embroiled in an elaborate and tiresome plot involving the usual mayhem: a murder, a televangelist, a beautiful blonde, a big brute, and a dastardly villain.

Although *Fletch Lives* is genuinely funny at times, more often it flounders and flails. None of the blame, however, falls on Chase, who does his

best to evoke laughs in the face of a flat screenplay. Chase gives his character that biting sarcasm and quick wit that made the first film so much fun. And, as in the original, Chase's disguises are simply amazing and his impersonations brilliant. When Chase passes himself off as a faith healer, for example, he's completely unrecognizable, and the scene proves to be one of the few in the movie to offer some inspired humor.

Unfortunately, Chase's efforts are sabotaged by the film's incredibly uneven script and unnecessarily complicated story line. While some of the jokes and gags are effective, most of them fizzle and cater to the lowest common denominator. In fact, *Fletch Lives* hits rock bottom when it commits the unforgivable sin of resorting to nose-picking jokes. *Fletch Lives* also suffers from excess plot; the uninspired story line should have been merely an excuse for Fletch's irreverent impersonations and wisecracks. But the film devotes so much time and energy to its insipid plot that the comic moments often get lost in the shuffle.

Ultimately, there's very little to recommend in *Fletch Lives* as the movie fails to give us either sympathetic characters or sufficient laughs.