

Heart Condition ★★

Year of Release: 1990

Review by Randy Parker

Country: USA

Verdict: Skip It

Heart Condition is all over the map; it's a high-concept mess, suffering from multiple personalities. Every few minutes, the film changes genre, switching from buddy movie, to ghost comedy, to dramatic character study, and to cops and robbers action. The movie is a case study in schizophrenia.

Bob Hoskins plays an overweight cop who smokes and eats greasy food. He's a heart attack waiting to happen. And ten minutes into the movie, it does happen: Hoskins nearly dies of heart failure. His life is saved thanks to a last second transplant; Denzel Washington plays the donor, a debonair lawyer who's been murdered. The hook is that Washington returns as a ghost to haunt Hoskins, pestering him to bring the killers to justice.

Writer-director James Parriott seems to be striving for the glossy mix of comedy and action that raked in big bucks for *Beverly Hills Cop*. And in Washington, the movie has an actor with enough charisma to blow Eddie Murphy off the screen. Unfortunately, thanks to Parriott's inept, cliché-ridden script, *Heart Condition* never gels. The running joke is that Hoskins can see Washington, but no one else can see him. So you have countless

scenes in which Hoskins argues with Washington in public. To everyone else around him, it looks like Hoskins is yelling at himself. Gee, what will they think of next?

The movie is pretty dumb, but luckily the performances make it bearable. Washington is simply captivating; he's an exciting screen presence, even in a corpse like *Heart Condition*. Hoskins is a tremendously gifted comic actor, but regrettably he is betrayed by inferior material. As Hoskins' ex-girlfriend, Chloe Webb makes her mixed-up character seem reasonably convincing. But it *is* hard to believe that she's actually attracted to Hoskins' grungy character. In fact, when she kissed him at the screening I attended, someone in the audience responded with a resounding "Yuck!"

Perhaps the most amusing aspect of *Heart Condition* is Washington's wardrobe. After he dies and becomes a ghost, Washington's clothing magically changes in every scene to match his environment. At the beach, he's in shorts and a T-shirt. In the hospital, he's in a spiffy blue bathrobe. Apparently, ghosts can change their wardrobe at will. Oh, the joys of the afterlife...