

Movie Draft: *Honeybaby*

by Mike Wagner

(*Honeybaby* is one of five made-up films generated during PoopReading.com's recent [Movie Draft](#).)

After overflowing the movie-going public's toilet with last year's stinker *Rule #3*, why would Joe Mulder go to the well again and engage in what, at first blush, is another remake of a popular movie? Even George Clooney's performance, which may as well have been named "Manny Bocean" couldn't rescue *Rule #3*'s lesser version of *Ocean's 11*. Now, Mulder comes back – one year later – with *Honeybaby*. You'd be within your rights to say, "Another movie where Mark Ruffalo is in love with a cute ghost? I don't think so."

But you'd be wrong.

Mulder's *Honeybaby* is a revelation. Ruffalo shines as English professor Chris DeLucca in a performance that is rightly gaining Oscar buzz (which is more than I can say for Jeff Bridges in *Nocturna*). Whether quoting Shakespeare, or the tender scene in DeLucca's office where he witnesses a young student coming out, Ruffalo embodies the gentle humor, nervous energy, and easy madness often found in the nation's universities.

Yes, Ruffalo's in love with a ghost that only he sees. This time, Reese Witherspoon is replaced by the lovely Jennifer Lawrence. *Honeybaby* died in a car accident that DeLucca survived, but that didn't stop them from continuing to see each other across their respective dimensions for the past twenty years. Lawrence shows a newfound depth, revealed both in times of supernatural bliss with DeLucca and when he meets the flesh and blood Elisa Winkle (Portman), a medical student with a painful past of her own. Portman perfectly conveys the doe-eyed hope and excitement of new love while still letting us know that she's not quite sure what to make of something so right.

The masterful, kinetic, script really gets cooking when we learn that A) DeLucca is seeing a therapist (Melissa Leo) to get over *Honeybaby* and B) the therapist turns out to be Winkle's mother! Mulder slowly and deliciously ratchets up a multi-front war on DeLucca that Ruffalo sublimely navigates, dealing with a professionally conflicted mom-therapist, a phantom love unhappy that things that her professor has eyes for a living, breathing medical student, and a new love that can't quite figure out who DeLucca is looking at when he looks so lost and hurt.

The ingenious way that Leo's Dr. Weisman gets DeLucca to reveal the truth to her daughter is even more fantastically shocking than the moment we learned Bruce Willis was dead in *The Sixth Sense*. The consequences of that revelation on *Honeybaby* are much more interesting than what we might've expected from a paranormal rom-com. *Honeybaby* does not go gently into that good night once she knows her beloved

has found an earthly lover. Just as I was hoping that DeLucca would find Peter Venkman on speed dial, Mulder enlists Portman to bring down the house. Her tender, frightened, and electric "I see her too" at the climax of the picture has already become the "you had me at hello" of 2011.

Honeybaby is a winner. It's *Just Like Heaven* meets a good movie.

Honeybaby is rated PG-13. There's a bit too much of Mr. Ruffalo's backside for my taste and language bordering on the typical self-satisfied-but-funny-anyway ribald so often found in the academy.
