

Bogus

US : 1996 : dir. Norman Jewison : : 105 min
 prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:
[Haley Joel Osment](#)
 Whoopi Goldberg; Gérard Depardieu; Nancy Travis; Denis Mercier; Andrea Martin;
 Ute Lemper; Sheryl Lee Ralph; Al Waxman; Don Francks; Mo'Nique

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω □ € Z ♀	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide
 2001 review:

"Curious fable about a boy whose single mom dies in an accident; his closest relative, a foster-aunt (Goldberg), turns out to be an uptight businesswoman with no motherly instinct whatsoever. So he invents a friend, Bogus (Depardieu), who cheers him up and sticks by his side. Odd, melancholy, and vaguely unsatisfying – not to mention long and slow. **"

Radio Times review:

"**"MOONSTRUCK"** director Norman Jewison has Whoopi Goldberg and Gérard Depardieu at his disposal for this fantasy comedy, as well as **"SIXTH SENSE"** star Haley Joel Osment, and all he produces is sentimental codswallop. The clichéd story has recently orphaned Osment developing a relationship with an imaginary friend called Bogus (Depardieu). It may prove entertaining for younger children. Edited [*sic*] for language. **"

"Fantasy comedy. An orphan finds solace in an invisible friend. **"

No further information currently available. It's mysterious how often cinema turkeys signal their shortcomings to the public in their own titles – witness **"OVER THE TOP"**, **"TOO MUCH"**. I glimpsed only a few minutes of this one, but that scene was sufficiently cloying to discourage further patience. The sight of blustering, stocky Depardieu in touchy-feely mode as a small child's invisible (and unaccountably gallic) friend – splashing in the bath with him, indeed – or Goldberg as a flustered surrogate parent, suggest nothing so much as casting by blind lot. Even if one accepts the proposition of a foster-aunt as a "relative", the fact of Goldberg being a black woman introduces once again a racial subtext we're somehow not supposed to notice. The fact that Osment's imaginary friend takes the shape of a grown man is not, one presumes, intended to be read as the boy's hunger for masculine company, having now been transferred from one "single mum" to another, but merely a general expression of insecurity. Being adopted outside his ethnic group would indeed aggravate that insecurity, as black lobbyists are keen to stress concerning the adoption of black children, but because Osment is white such considerations are delicately brushed aside. Foster-mum's the word.

Osment, here presumably 7 or 8, won wide praise for his role in **"THE SIXTH SENSE"** (99), and was later seen in **"PAY IT FORWARD"** (2000). The theme of children's fantasy friends is a broad one, and would have to include extraterrestrials, yetis, bigfoot, gremlins, vampires and talking animals of all descriptions. Some will be visible to other members of the household, but often – as with **"E.T."** – must be kept hidden from the parents at all costs.

See subject index under **FANTASY** and **ORPHANS / ADOPTION**.