

At one point in my youth, my friends and I were pre-occupied with two pressing issues, each of which prompted hours of heated debate.

First, who was faster — Superman or The Flash? And second, who was funnier — *The Addams Family* or *The Munsters*?

While we could reach no definitive conclusion to the first question, there was no doubt in my mind about the latter. Gomez, Morticia and their spooky brood won hands down every time.

So it's a particular pleasure to report that they're back — and not on some grainy black-and-white TV set, but up where they belong.

THE ADDAMS FAMILY

in gloriously ghoulish color on the big screen.

What's even better is that this is no mere remake of the television series but a full-length film inspired by the eerie dark humor of Charles Addams's original cartoons, as they first appeared in the pages of *The New Yorker* magazine.

The casting seems fiendishly fitting. Who better to play Morticia than Anjelica Huston? She scared the bejeebers out of kids as the black-hearted sorceress in *The Witches* and gave adults the creeps playing the callous con artist in her Oscar-nominated performance in *The Grifters*.

And who better than Raul Julia to portray that archetypal Latin lover, Gomez? With such serious dramas as *Kiss of the Spider Woman* and *Havana* to his credit, now Julia goes for the laughs as the suave and impeccably dressed head of the family, a husband so hot-blooded that he still swoons at the slightest batting of his wife's eyelashes.

Let's not forget lovable Uncle Fester, now played by Christopher Lloyd who, from his early days as Reverend Jim on TV's *Taxi* to his starring role in the *Back to the Future* trilogy, has made a career out of playing absolute loons. Or the cadaverous butler Lurch, the roly poly Pugsley and, of course, darling little Wednesday with her collection of headless Marie



Antoinette dolls.

And yes, it goes without saying that the ever-courteous Thing lends an able hand to the proceedings, popping up where he's least expected, his disembodied digits always ready to pick up the phone or offer a hearty backscratch.

Making his directorial debut

with **The Addams Family** is award-winning cinematographer Barry Sonnenfeld who lensed such recent hits as *Misery*, *Miller's Crossing* and *When Harry Met Sally*.

The script comes courtesy of Caroline Thompson who wrote *Edward Scissorhands*, Larry

Wilson of *Beetlejuice* fame and New York-based novelist and playwright Paul Rudnick. In it, the Addams's goofily gothic lifestyle is threatened when their trusted family attorney and a greedy mother-son team conspire to steal the family fortune.

It all plays out in the family's vast Victorian mansion, which rises 75 feet high and features an underground river flowing through its depths.

The costumes and special effects for **The Addams Family** are truly eye-popping. To set the fingers snapping, there are several musical production numbers, including "Mamushka," which marks Uncle Fester's homecoming and rivals the deliriously funny "Day-O" scene in the aforementioned *Beetlejuice*.

Back in the 1930s when Charles Addams first created his macabre family of misfits, the bizarre series of cartoons that followed were definitely an acquired taste. But hey, these are the '90s, when weird is wonderful and a legion of fans both young and old are waiting to welcome back the Addams clan with open arms.

And as for Herman Munster — who's he?

The Addams Family opens in theatres across Canada on November 22.

— David Mills



ELEVEN



Top: Mr. and Mrs. Addams (Raul Julia and Anjelica Huston) share an intimate moment away from their freaky family. Above: Christopher Lloyd as twisted but lovable Uncle Fester.