



Taking a weird, worthy 'Ride'

BY CHARLES BRITTON

As a character says in "Along for the Ride," "Weird, huh?"

Yeah, but it works, despite a premise that seems like a set-up. Seems . . . *is* a set-up. Two estranged brothers, one a success, the other a plodder, go to a remote corner of the Mexican desert when their father dies. Neither had much use for the old man, but they decide to load his corpse into the back seat of their convertible and drive him to the nearest mortuary.

Of course, they're going to find out much more about themselves and their relationship to their father during the ordeal. The old man was a minor-league baseball player who ended up in a Mexican league and decided to stay on. Son Terry (Randall Batinkoff) had a lucrative career in the majors, cut short by injury. His younger brother, Vance (Dylan Haggerty), seems to be a loner and a loser. As each takes turns dozing on the long trip, the old man (J.E. Freeman) visits them in dreams.

The basic idea is outlandish from a practical viewpoint but sound psychologically, since all of us drive around with baggage from the past, including much loaded on us by our

parents. In any case, the script by Jim Moores, adapted from a play, has natural but pointed dialogue and some well-crafted scenes – my favorite being Terry's discussion of life in the big leagues while the brothers change a tire.

In what is essentially a three-character piece, the acting stands out, especially that of Freeman, in the smallest of the main roles, as the boys' not especially likeable dad.

Bryan Simon's direction wisely lets the acting speak for itself, while wringing every penny's worth from a minuscule budget.

REVIEW

"Along for the Ride"

★ ★ ★ ☆

Drama. A Montivagus release directed by Bryan W. Simon
Starring Dylan Haggerty,
Randall Batinkoff and J.E. Freeman.
Not rated. Opens Saturday, plays
10 a.m. Saturdays and Sundays at
Laemmle's Sunset 5, West Hollywood.