

Rating: «« out of «««««

Running Time: 107 minutes

Five years ago, *The Lego Movie* was released to unexpected acclaim and success, a surprising feat for a motion picture based on a toy line. In the years since, we’ve seen two spin-off flicks which weren’t quite up to the original standard, but still provided enough inventive visuals and laughs to provide decent family entertainment.

Maybe it is a result of too much coming too fast, but sadly, *The Lego Movie 2: The Second Part* is the weakest link in this franchise.

In the years following the original film, nice-guy Lego figure Emmet Brickowski (Chris Pratt) has had to make some adjustments. The once great Lego city has been invaded by strange Duplo creations and their world has been transformed into a post-apocalyptic wasteland.

Of course, Emmet’s optimism is still unwavering, but friend Lucy (Elizabeth Banks) wishes he would grow up and behave in a more appropriate and brooding manner. There is one problem plaguing our hero though, coming in a premonition of an “Armageddon”.

When the Duplo Queen Watevra (Tiffany Haddish) kidnaps Emmet’s friends and makes plans to marry hostage Batman (Will Arnett), the protagonist sees it as an opportunity to show his tougher side.

There are some amusing visuals present in this follow-up. The, large and blocky Duplo beings (sometimes voiced by a young girl) have a funny and surreal appearance, serving as an amusing contrast to the typical Lego characters.

Later, as Emmet sets out on his hero’s journey, he briefly encounters an 80s action film icon who lands a couple of funny comments. And there are also some amusing asides from Batman, who remains as self-involved and insecure as a superhero can be.

Unfortunately, most of the other comic material is overly familiar and feels rehashed. There’s even a re-imagining of the “Everything is Awesome” song, along with the inclusion of more musical numbers. The timing of the jokes is off this time out and far more gags land with a silent thud instead of connecting. And while previous installments in the franchise have presented some really epic background landscapes, the Lego-inspired settings and images this time out aren’t as visually dazzling.

Another problem is the story itself, which doesn’t offer much in the way of surprises. This feature’s big twist is telegraphed well ahead of time. And since this follow-up chooses to cut back and forth between the Lego world and outside human environment more frequently, it takes viewers out of the story and makes them less concerned about the Lego characters.

Also, given that the real world children are the focus here, they’re the persons whom viewers spend the majority of the time with; Will Ferrell only provides his voice for this sequel, although there is an amusing cameo from another family member.

While the original film had a universal appeal, this follow-up is squarely and exclusively aimed at kids. The message is direct and simple, suggesting that older children be inclusive with younger tykes and allow them to play with their toys... although on first viewing the story didn’t appear to suggest that family members should ask permission to borrow items and not simply take things without asking.

Of course, that is nit-picking a bit. The primary issue with *The Lego Movie 2: The Second Part* is that the story doesn’t feel fresh and the verbal and sight gags as written aren’t nearly as funny

this time out. The pieces are all there, but this time out, they simply don’t fit together.

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