

'How To Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World' makes the cut for genial family entertainment

Written by Gallupsun Staff
Friday, 01 March 2019 10:26



Rating: <<< out of <<<<<<

Running Time: 104 minutes

Based on a series of children's books, the original *How to Train Your Dragon* was surprisingly entertaining and effective, following a young Viking who decided to upset societal norms and befriend a dragon instead of slaying it. The second feature took a darker turn, so much so that sections of it distressed younger audience members.

Following a TV series, the third and reportedly final chapter in the series has now arrived. *How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World* is a more genial effort that will certainly please children.

Truthfully, it lacks the same kind of drama seen in previous installments. However, some parents may still be pleased as this time out the events are unlikely to result in any awkward conversations with their children about mortality.

Since the last installment, Hiccup (Jay Baruchel) and his dragon Toothless have created a home where humans and dragons live in peace. In fact, they regularly lead clan members on missions to rescue dragons from nasty humans.

Unfortunately, there are some negative side effects to their partnership. Overpopulation has resulted in a crowded living space. It also draws the attention of Grimmel the Grisley (F. Murray

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Abraham), a dragon hunter who wants to wipe out the lifeform, and in particular, Toothless.

Grisley uses a female dragon to try to lure in his prey, while Hiccup deals with the pressures of being a leader, as well as his relationship with Astrid (America Ferrera). The protagonist decides the answer is to try to find the Hidden World, described as a mystical, undiscovered area where dragons are believed to live safe and free.

The high points of this second sequel are the visuals. This is an impressively animated film with spectacular sights. It's hard not to be impressed at a sweeping skyline filled with flying dragons or with the creatures soaring through clouds, hurricanes and other impressive environments.

This movie is obviously written with children in mind and so the jokes are very straightforward and direct. Still, a few may manage to earn laughs from older audience members. Toothless' awkward attempts to impress the female dragon with dances and movements are quite funny.

Hiccup's extremely verbose Viking friend Ruffnut (Kristen Wiig) also earns a chuckle as her constant chatter grates on Grisley. And there are a couple of decent sight gags as well, including sheep decked out in dragon costumes.

It's all very sweet, although this follow-up does come off as far tamer than others in the series. The villain of the piece is well-voiced, but isn't given memorable dialogue or much personality more than that of a generic antagonist. While there is a tense moment or two towards the close, there certainly isn't as much imminent danger present in this adventure.

And curiously enough for a film titled after its Hidden World, viewers won't see an awful lot of the locale beyond one sequence or get any sort of impression of how it came to be. It also comes across as remarkably easy to find.

At least the finale does have pleasant messages about believing in yourself and allowing those around you to follow their own path, even if it doesn't present its heroes with many struggles in reaching its big conclusion.

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Still, the movie has a few nice moments towards the end that should provide fans with appropriate closure to the series. *How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World* isn't as unforgettable as earlier chapters, but it does manage to end the trilogy without crashing to the ground.

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