

'Pokémon Detective Pikachu' is salvaged by a great voice performance

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 17 May 2019 03:00



Rating: «« out of «««««

Running Time: 104 minutes

Unfortunately, movie adaptations of video games tend to have pretty poor reputations. In the past, we've been dealt the less-than-stellar *Super Mario Brothers*, *Wing Commander*, *House of the Dead*

,
Hitman
, and
Need for Speed
. When
Lara Croft: Tomb Raider
and
Prince of Persia

represent the genre heights, that is not a good sign. The bad news about *Pokémon Detective Pikachu*

is that it is far from a masterpiece that solves all of the issues other films of its ilk possess. However, the good news is that it's better than the previous titles mentioned, and is amusing enough in spots to earn a modest recommendation.

After receiving word that his estranged father has gone missing and is likely deceased, young and reserved insurance agent Tim Goodman (Justice Smith) travels to make final arrangements for his parent. He arrives in Ryme City, a unique metropolis in which humans and Pokémon characters coexist. Once there, he comes into contact with his father's Pikachu (Ryan Reynolds) and gets a big surprise when he realizes that they can communicate verbally with one another. With the Pikachu suffering from amnesia and Tim wanting to determine what exactly happened to his father, the pair team up and investigate, encountering all sorts of unusual beings along the way.

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First off, this reviewer knows next to nothing about the gaming franchise or its characters. There are certainly attempts made to introduce this strange universe to viewers, but admittedly several elements and references clearly flew over my head. The creatures themselves are always interesting to look at, even if they don't appear to do much besides chirp and fight. It's unfortunate that these supporting monsters don't offer much in the way of personality (although even some of the human supporting roles as written are clumsy and too exaggerated for their own good). It doesn't end up making one all that invested in the plight of the supporting characters.

Thankfully, as readers might have already guessed, the movie's winning element is the inclusion of Ryan Reynolds as the voice of the talking Pikachu. It's a perfect match, with the cutely designed little character delivering plenty of sass and funny quips as the investigation progresses. Reynolds' voice-work also allows the fluff-ball to emote and express a variety of feelings. There's a particularly funny scene late in the movie as a dejected Pikachu attempts to sing what is assumed to be the Pokémon theme song while struggling to hold back tears. When this character is placed center stage and is interacting and bickering with Tim, the movie works. In fact, it's a pretty safe assumption to make, that without the charismatic voice delivery from Reynolds, the movie would have likely been a mess.

And the visuals also make an impression. The neon-tinged Ryme City looks nifty and there's one really striking action bit that stands out. It involves the protagonists searching for a lead in their case and finding a mountainous environment turning and twisting around them (not unlike something you might see in a kid-friendly take on Christopher Nolan's *Inception*). Members of the group are forced into trying to avoid being crushed and falling to their demise down various chasms. It's certainly the most interesting action sequence in the feature.

Of course, there isn't much to the mystery itself, and the villain's identity is unlikely to surprise viewers. Still, it's hard not to enjoy watching the one or two impressive adventure scenes and the numerous interactions between Tim and the sharp-witted Pikachu. For this reason, just enough of *Pokémon Detective Pikachu* succeeds to recommend to kids and forgiving adults curious about this strange video game-inspired world.

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