

Rating: ««««

out of «««««

Running Time: 108 minutes

This film is playing at open cinemas and drive-ins on April 9.

I’m not sure if NASA has ever considered sending a team of young astronauts into orbit for space missions, but if they have, the new film *Voyagers* will likely cause them to question the idea. It’s a movie that places teenagers against a science-fiction backdrop and seems in part inspired by the classic William Golding novel
Lord of the Flies
. Admittedly, the end results aren’t perfect, but the young cast is solid and the movie is a slick and polished piece of entertainment that will certainly intrigue anyone unfamiliar with one of the feature’s main sources of inspiration.

In the future of this movie, global warming is slowly making the world uninhabitable. After locating an Earth-like planet 86 years away, scientist Richard Ailing (Colin Farrell) begins a program. It involves taking a crew of child astronauts, created in the lab and raised in isolation,

to the planet for possible colonization. Alas, the lengthy journey means that it will be a multi-generational trip, with the youngsters onboard unlikely to see the final destination.

Ten years into the mission, teenagers Christopher (Tye Sheridan) and Zac (Fionn Whitehead) learn that all the water onboard has been treated with a chemical to make them docile. They stop drinking the beverage and find their moods and hormones out-of-control. Zac starts a rebellion and Christopher becomes concerned about his pal's violent turn, as well as the safety of Sela (Lily-Rose Depp), whom Zac lusts after.

The spaceship environment, locked-off camera angles and stiff behavior of the teens early on, effectively creates a tight and claustrophobic feel aboard the ship. Considering most of the cast is made up of young people, the characters are reasonably well-layered, too. Naturally, leader Ailing feels guilty about some of his choices and understands that the situation they find themselves in is problematic, personally witnessing how tough the confined and unhealthy environment is for the kids. It's also interesting to see teens who don't possess the social skills of others their age and who are, in some respects, easy to manipulate.

Of course, major problems arise after one main suspicion of the two leads is confirmed. Zac and Christopher become far more rash in their actions. Paranoia sets in and they also argue against having their lives planned out. This is where the *Lord of the Flies*-like scenarios come into play.

In general, they work and the confrontations are well-edited and exciting to watch. As Zac's desire for power grows and he begins lying to and threatening those around him, the movie does generate tension. As Zac gets more extreme and the action heats up, the camera adopts a more handheld feel. And even though the movie can't release its characters from the small sets and spaces, the climactic showdown is suspenseful.

As mentioned, there are a few flaws. Naturally, one has to suspend disbelief at the beginning and accept the concept of a dangerous space mission involving small children onboard performing various feats. The movie does a great job of creating a microcosm of society, dealing with issues like the influence of dangerous people in society as a whole. Yet the filmmakers do feel compelled to resolve things in a very simple manner, cleaning plotlines up and leaving no mess behind. Naturally, the struggles any leader contends with don't simply go away with a comment or two, so it would have been interesting to see more of an open-ended or grayer resolution.

Still, beyond the immediate message of not allowing unsupervised teenagers to run riot on a spaceship, there is more going on underneath the surface of *Voyagers* than in many other teen-centric movies. The film is also well-performed, has a great deal of conflict and the pacing rarely lags. In the end, this is a solid science-fiction effort that should satisfy teenagers and will likely even keep the attention of older viewers.

VISIT: WWW.CINEMASTANCE.COM

By Glenn Kay
For the Sun