

'Paw Patrol: The Mighty Movie' is familiar, but will entertain the kids

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Rating: ««

out of «««««

Running Time:
92 minutes

This feature from Paramount Pictures and Nickelodeon opened in cinemas on Friday, Sept. 29.

Anyone who is a parent with young kids is assuredly aware of the *PAW Patrol* animated series. It seems to appeal to just about every little one out there, serving as a ratings juggernaut since its 2013 debut. After 10 seasons and a hit 2021 feature film, the characters are back on the big screen once again.

PAW Patrol: The Mighty Movie feels like an attempt to update the show (or at the very least create a spin-off series) by adding superhero elements into its story. The picture is very formulaic, but it will deliver the heroic pooch goods for its target demographic.

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For those unfamiliar with the franchise, the story involves a group of almost-all canine characters who do their best to protect the citizens of Adventure City. They include group leader and young boy Ryder (Finn Lee-Epp), police dog Chase (Christian Convery), fire dog Marshall (Christian Corrao), aviator canine Skye (Mckenna Grace), recycler pooch Rocky (Callum Shoniker), aquatic rescue pup Zuma (Nylan Parthipan), construction dog Rubble (Luxton Handspiker) and newest canine team member Liberty (Marsai Martin). When the villainous Victoria Vance (Taraji P. Henson) attempts to cause a meteorite crash and harness the falling rock’s remarkable powers, things don’t go as planned.

The PAW Patrol end up recovering the space stone crystals, which amplify their individual strengths. Now superheroes, they are even stronger, but that all changes when Vance teams with Mayor Humdinger (Ron Pardo) to steal their powers, leaving the dogs at a disadvantage.

It’s a slicker-looking show in comparison to the television series. The widescreen framing adds a bit of oomph to the proceedings and the bigger production allows for some grander set pieces, including the meteor crash and scenes of animals flying, or blasting fire and water into the air. And the message is sweet, even if it is overstated and bluntly delivered.

The story focuses on Skye, who hasn’t grown as large as the other dogs and feels underappreciated. Despite moments of insecurity and worry for Skye, leader Ryder constantly reminds her and the other dogs that they are valued for their personal strength, uniqueness and ability to work as a team.

The power-crystal concept is an interesting one and the screenwriters manage to eke out a fun moment or two whenever their special powers are transferred. When Liberty discovers her skillset, it results in an amusing rescue. Mayor Humdinger gets an entertaining moment rampaging down the streets of Adventure City. And there is one very funny joke featuring a cat that very briefly ends up in possession of a special stone.

However, other than a quick line or two and one scene involving a villain, the screenplay doesn’t maximize the idea’s potential. There could have been a lot of wild situations and humor derived from the crystals jumping into the possession of various individuals (and showing how even a random passerby might be hiding something remarkable). But it’s obvious what almost every dog’s skill set is, so there aren’t any surprises or suspense related to their newfound abilities. The group all end up in superhero costumes doing, well, exactly what you would expect. As a result, the plot doesn’t come across as memorable.

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PAW Patrol: The Mighty Movie is competent and well-intentioned, but has been crafted exclusively for smaller children and offers very little for older viewers. It also leads one to believe that we'll now be seeing these rescue dogs continuing to fly in the sky and perform incredible tasks during their next season. While this reviewer is personally inclined to give the picture a 2, the target viewership would likely rate it a 3 or higher. In this case, splitting the difference on a final rating seems appropriate.

NOTE: A brief short called *Dora and the Fantastical Creatures* appears in front of the feature. It isn't very strong and is essentially an advertisement for an upcoming Nickelodeon series starring the *Dora the Explorer* character.

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