

‘Chicken Run: Dawn of the Nugget’ is an unexpected but delightful sequel

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

out of «««««

Running Time:
98 minutes

This animated motion picture will premiere on Netflix Friday, Dec. 15.

In the year 2000, British animation studio Aardman premiered their first feature-length movie. That feature was *Chicken Run* and it was a massive hit with critics and at the box office. It likely would have snagged an Oscar for Best Animated Film, but remarkably this award category didn't yet exist at the time. After a very, very long wait, a somewhat unexpected sequel has arrived.

The 23-year break between films suggests that *Chicken Run: Dawn of the Nugget* may not really need to exist. Despite this potential issue, the final product is chock-full of fun and delivers plenty of laughs once it hits its stride.

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Set not long after the events of the first film, Ginger (Thandiwe Newton) and Rocky (Zachary Levi) have escaped the clutches of their prison-like egg farm and are now living free with other escapees on a beautiful island. The two are also raising a daughter named Molly (Bella Ramsey), who yearns for adventure and a life away from their pastoral home.

When Molly sneaks back to the mainland, she accidentally comes across Fun-Land Farms, a surprisingly high-security facility filled with fellow chickens. Panicked parents Ginger and Rocky and a few friends follow her trail and soon find themselves at the same mysterious locale. It isn't long before they uncover a deadly plot involving Mrs. Tweedy (Miranda Richardson), the old, vindictive proprietor of the egg farm.

While the story is set in the same period as the original, the time-lag between the two productions means that the protagonists are now voiced by completely different performers. For those who remember the original, it does take a bit of time to adjust to the slightly different voices and characterizations. Additionally, there isn't a great deal of drama or conflict in the opening scenes, at least until Molly finds herself in a strange and unexpected location.

However, once Molly arrives in a gaudy area populated by complacent, almost zombie-like chickens, the laughs start coming. The first film was inspired by *The Great Escape*, while this one provides an amusing contrast as the leads must put themselves back in danger and break into a fortified, well, farm. Its high-tech security involves a moat with metallic, laser-shooting ducks, and when necessity calls, human intervention via a person dressed in a zip-up chicken suit. Naturally, there is a great deal of effective humor from these bizarre sights, as well as the heroic animals sneaking through the building and trying to avoid detection.

And when the secret and dastardly plot is eventually revealed by Mrs. Tweedy and cohort Dr. Fry (Nick Mohammed) to a fast-food chain owner (Peter Serafinowicz), it is hilarious to witness.

Parents should note that while there is no graphic business shown, an unsuspecting bird does fall prey to the hungry villains. However, it's handled in a clever manner and the tactic also adds tension to the climax, as it is imminently clear that the lives of all the chicken protagonists are very much on the line.

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As with other Aardman productions, the animation and visuals are impeccable. Obviously, some CGI elements have been used on this production, but the movie still employs physical elements. The end result is that the film has the classic stop-motion look of the studio's classic works with an ever cleaner and sharper image. The chicken island paradise pops off the screen with a big splash, as do the colorful but mechanized interiors of Fun-Land Farms.

If you appreciated the original film, the quirky *Chicken Run: Dawn of the Nugget* will also entertain. It looks fantastic and once the main characters find themselves in the surreal and eerie farm, the movie delivers loads of laughs and thrills. Despite the lengthy passage of time between servings, this offering is still a tasty treat.

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