

'Vacation' Re-do: A fresh take on a classic dysfunctional family

Written by By David Pinson For the Sun
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« « « **out of five stars**

The Hollywood Hills echo the sound of regurgitation. A collective yack heard round the world as they recycle every plot idea they can buy the rights to.

I have screamed, moaned and complained about this for years but there is no end in sight. I suppose my Klout score holds little to no leverage with the powers that greenlight. So I've resigned to the fact that do-overs are going to happen but we don't have to like them. Unless, of course, they are entertaining.

Fortunately the new version of *Vacation* delivers plenty of self-aware laughs, embracing the fact that this is a retread the same way that the hilarious

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Jump Street

did. I blame the cast for this giddy trip down the holiday road. Ed Helms and Cristina Applegate are perfectly cast as Rusty and Debbie Griswold with Helms playing the oblivious buffoon just as good as Chevy Chase did in the originals.

There is also plenty to love regarding the supporting cast. Skyler Gisondo and Steele Stebbins as the Griswold kids are wonderful little morons that provide many of the film's laugh out loud moments. Chris Hemsworth chews up the scenery as the cowboy brother-in-law, Stone Crandall and Charlie Day shows up for a suicidal trip down the rapids of the Colorado River.

The plot does not provide many speaking points but it really doesn't have to. It's a *Vacation* movie, so, you know, they go on vacation and funny stuff happens. That's the pitch. Rusty and his family are in a rut so it is off to Wally World, the destination from the 1983 classic. They visit family and landmarks along the way with funny bits at each stopping point.

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There are some similarities with the Chase movies but this movie provides enough fresh ideas to stand on its own. There’s even a bit in the film speaking to the fact that you don’t have to see the original to enjoy this film. It’s funny and true.

Speaking of Chase, he is the weakest part of the movie. Luckily he has very little screen time but every second is awkward and unfunny. We do not need his blessing. He is not needed here at all.

Fans of *Freaks and Geeks* and *Bones* will find it interesting to know that the film is co-written and co-directed by John Francis Daley and his writing partner, Jonathan M. Goldstein.

The pair also wrote the first *Horrible Bosses* film and you will notice a distinct similarity in the crudeness of the humor. This is a hard- R film that pushes the border of obscene with a couple of scenes. Doesn’t bother me though, just be aware.

Simply put, *Vacation* is a comedy and it is funny so it succeeds. I could take the highfalutin critic’s stance that we need fresh ideas and that we shouldn’t support the remakes.

But I won’t. I liked it. I am not ashamed.

Ok. I’m a little ashamed.