

‘Missing Link’ takes viewers on a beautifully realized animated adventure

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 19 April 2019 05:04



Rating: «««« out of «««««

Running Time: 95 minutes

Laika is an animation studio that has produced consistently impressive features over the years, including *Kubo and the Two Strings*, *The Boxtrolls*, *ParaNorman*, and *Coraline*. Their latest continues with the trend of intersecting family entertainment thrills with darker, supernatural, and monster-related subject matter. Thankfully,

Missing Link

is another big winner, blending amusing characters, a sweet message and some staggeringly beautiful visuals.

The story begins with Sir Lionel Frost (Hugh Jackman), a self-described adventurer seeking to prove the existence of mythical creatures and impress a stuffy club of explorers led by Lord Piggot-Dunceby (Stephen Fry). After receiving a note telling him where to find the elusive Sasquatch, Frost heads out to the Pacific Northwest, where he comes into contact with the beast, who he names Mr. Link (Zach Galifianakis).

The protagonist is not only shocked to learn that Bigfoot can talk, but that he's quite modest. In fact, Mr. Link tells Frost that he is desperately lonely and needs a guide to find his Yeti cousins in the Himalayas. The two come to an agreement and head out on the quest. Along the way, the team is pursued by a nasty bounty hunter (Timothy Olyphant) as well as Frost's old flame, Adelina Fortnight (Zoe Saldana).

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The movie itself doesn't go for broad jokes and is surprisingly low-key. Instead, it examines and introduces the fantastic with a sense of wonder, and even allows its exaggerated characters an innocent charm. Mr. Link is extremely likable and pleasant, contrasting the notion of Sasquatch being a potential threat to others. Frost and the bigfoot featured are a perfect comic pairing, with the former trying to exude a sense of nobility and importance, and the latter possessing a naive sweetness.

As the film progresses, there's plenty of humor derived from Mr. Link misinterpreting his new friend's turns of phrase and taking remarks quite literally, leading to several mishaps. The explorer also concocts an amusing disguise for his discovery, dressing him in a loud suit to try and pass him off as nothing more than a... well... large and hairy man. There's also an amusing turn from The Elder (Emma Thompson), a character who appears late in the feature. She has some very strong opinions, but unintentionally points out many of the flaws in her beliefs, as she barks orders to others.

Of course, the animation is superb in every respect. In fact, it is almost like a kid's book travelogue as Frost moves from Loch Ness to the Pacific Northwest, heads down through the Southwest US, across Europe, India, and eventually Nepal (and the fabled Shangri-La). Not only do the environments presented look incredible, but there are some delightful visual ideas interspersed along the way during action scenes; such sequences include a confrontation between the heroes and the bounty hunter on a ship being rocked through enormous waves. The leads must deal with spinning hallways as they escape.

And the movie has a welcome message as the protagonists finally reach their icy destination and Mr. Link attempts to make new bonds with his cousins. As it happens, the two begin to wonder if their constant efforts to make their peers like and respect them, are really worth all the trouble...especially when the pair realize they have far more in common than members of their respected cliques.

Admittedly, the story is straight-forward and simple (and parents of very small children should be made aware that some of the villains meet unfortunate ends). However, when the characters and visuals are this distinctive, it's impossible not to be charmed. While it may be early in the year, this reviewer can safely say that *Missing Link* is his favorite animated family film thus far. This is an entertaining and beautifully drawn adventure that is well worth taking.

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