

'Abominable' has beautiful visuals, bland characters

Written by Gallupsun Staff
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Rating: <<< out of <<<<<<

Running Time: 97 minutes

It is always strange how studios tend to develop similar projects at the same time and double-down on them. There were two Wyatt Earp westerns made the same year, and other examples in the past include two asteroid movies, two volcano flicks, as well as a pair of family features about insects (specifically, *Antz* and *A Bug's Life*). Well, it appears to have happened once again.

Abominable is the second animated film this year to use a large, hairy humanoid attempting to return home and find its family as subject matter (after the excellent *Missing Link* arrived earlier in the year). This title is certainly nice to look at, but will honestly only engage the youngest members of the family.

Yi (Chloe Bennet) is a young girl who has closed herself off emotionally from her family after the death of her father, giving up the violin (an activity with a connection to her deceased dad) and spending her days working odd jobs for extra cash. Her life changes dramatically after encountering an escaped Yeti on the roof of the family's complex building. Naming him Everest, she learns that the creature is on the run from his captors, specifically Dr. Zaha (Sarah Paulson) and her wealthy benefactor Burnish (Eddie Izzard). As forces close in, Yi becomes determined to reunite the Yeti with his kind and embarks on a lengthy trip across China from Shanghai to the Himalayas on the border of Nepal. Along for the ride and offering comic relief are relatives Peng (Albert Tsai) and Jin (Tenzing Norgay Trainor).

As mentioned, the movie assuredly features impressive visuals. Despite being large and bulky, Everest is a cute-looking Yeti creation. Both the Shanghai and natural environment are also

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beautiful. As the characters travel deeper into the wilderness, the film offers the opportunity to present some scenic backdrops. Everest's powers to manipulate nature grow stronger the closer the characters get to their destination, and that allows for a few impressive scenarios.

This includes a journey through the air between craggy, fog-drenched mountains on an enormous floating white dandelion. The most striking is a makeshift sailing journey of sorts, as the creature causes canola fields to roll, sweep and crest like waves in the sea, pulling the characters away from their pursuers.

However, for adults the images are the only thing likely to hold their attention. The dialogue is delivered slowly and the jokes are blunt and aimed at children. For example, while stowing away on a cargo boat heading inland, the characters subsist on soda and find themselves burping a lot. As written, the slowly-delivered and obvious interchanges don't do much to add a lot of personality to the leads or involve viewers in the story. Their pursuers are fairly one-note as well, with one of the pair revealing themselves to be sinister and the other questioning their own motives behind proving the existence of the Yeti. It's all done in an obvious manner and doesn't deliver anything you won't see coming miles ahead.

Another issue is Everest's continually increasing magical powers. They grow stronger and stronger as the group heads closer the Himalayas. This means that while it results in ever more impressive displays of Everest using the natural world to save the children, the level of tension and concern for the protagonists begins to lessen as he becomes a dominant force. In fact, one wonders why, given the supposed danger, Everest keeps waiting until the very last minute to rescue himself and the children. Deep down, one guesses that this Yeti may have a taste for unnecessary melodrama.

Of course, these criticisms of a family film may be a bit harsh. The environmentalist slant is welcome and the animation is quite beautiful at times. Small children will certainly like what they see and definitely enjoy the picture overall. However, adults are less likely to be as involved in the proceedings.

Abominable will work for parents who want their kids distracted while they zone out for ninety minutes. Unfortunately, those looking for memorable characters and a story that makes a dramatic impact will find themselves lost in the wild.

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