

'Borat Subsequent Moviefilm' delivers laughs, shocks in equal measure

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

Running Time: 96 minutes

This film debuted Oct. 23 exclusively on Amazon Prime Video.

Fourteen years ago, the world was simultaneously amused and shocked by *Borat*, a movie featuring an exaggerated and eccentric Kazakhstani reporter traveling across the U.S. to make a documentary about American culture. While speaking to random strangers and having several bizarre encounters, the movie ended up exposing less-than-flattering aspects of some of the nation's citizens. With the country now embracing more and more extremist views, the character has officially returned for the hysterically-entitled follow-up,

Borat Subsequent Moviefilm,

aka

Borat Subsequent Moviefilm: Delivery of Prodigious Bribe to American Regime for Make Benefit Once Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan

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When the movie isn't capturing interactions between the fictional character and real people, there is something of a plotline. As the picture begins, we learn that Borat (Sacha Baron Cohen) has been imprisoned for embarrassing his homeland after the release of the first film. Many years later, the protagonist is unexpectedly granted a release by government officials. They

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assign Borat with finding a way to meet Vice President Mike Pence, hoping to present the White House with a gift and earn the administration's favor.

However, things don't go according to plan and Borat soon discovers that his daughter Sandra Jessica Parker Sagdiyev (Irena Novak) has stowed away on the mission. As they attempt to make inroads with the government, the pair converse with locals from all walks of life.

What follows is a series of bawdy and elaborate pranks that stretch boundaries and push buttons. It's clear from the outset that maintaining Borat's anonymity has become far more difficult due to the success of the original feature. Thankfully, new disguises are employed to help keep things under wraps. Novak also helps out considerably as Borat's daughter, taking the stage for a few significant tricks in the movie and helping to keep targets from figuring out that they are being had.

Even within the fictional story and narration, there are plenty of cutting observations about the current state of the U.S. There is also a stronger message and theme being presented in this follow-up. In its own unique way, the movie advocates for woman's rights, explicitly shames the current administration and displays the ridiculousness of their conspiracy theories. And when Borat and Sandra interact with the real world, the movie really makes an impression, simultaneously amusing and horrifying viewers.

This is not so much because of the fictional character's blunt statements, but rather the responses from those not in on the joke.

Some of those pranked actually come off well, trying to help Borat reconsider his own views. Others ... do not fare nearly as well. In fact, many of the more extreme situations look incredibly dangerous and it's hard not to be concerned for the well-being of the comics as they try to eke reactions from their extreme behavior. This includes a bit at a Republican CPAC conference and an exceedingly unsettling visit to a gun-rights rally in Washington during the COVID lockdown that features a couple of individuals giving Nazi salutes.

The climax may present the most startling ruse of them all. It shows a famous and intimate member of Trump's team thoroughly embarrassing themselves. The very least that can be said is that this figure behaves in an unprofessional and very icky manner.

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And as if that isn't potent enough, on occasion the filmmakers present comedic examples of propaganda techniques, rhetoric and lies from the fictional version of Borat's government. Viewers soon witness real examples used by the current administration and their supporters. It doesn't take much imagination to see parallels between the exaggerated, fictional authoritarians and their real counterparts, adding a chilling element to the proceedings.

Admittedly, over the last 14 years the familiarity of the character and guerilla approach to collecting material have lessened some of the surprise and punch. Still, this film is very sharp and there are a couple of scenarios that actually do go so far as to shock and stun. It is also impressive that between the laughs, Cohen and his compatriots have attempted to champion a deeper message about changing leadership in the U.S. (and are actually willing to endanger themselves to do so). While making an effective and meaningful gross-out comedy might seem nearly impossible, *Borat Subsequent Moviefilm* ultimately achieves its goal.

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