

'Barb & Star go to Vista Del Mar' provides a few enjoyably bizarre sights

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

out of «««««

Running Time: 106 minutes

This title from Lionsgate is available on most streaming-on-demand platforms Feb. 12.

Back in 2011, *Bridesmaids* exploded on the scene and became one of the biggest hits of the year, landing the movie's co-writers Annie Mumolo and Kristen Wiig Oscar-nominations for their hilarious script. Nearly a decade later, the pair has penned the new comedy,

Barb & Star Go to Vista Del Mar

. The creators have taken a completely different tone this time out, veering toward eye-popping colors, sight gags and even the odd musical number. Admittedly, the same kind of accolades and awards aren't in this film's future and the gags are hit and miss.

Still, it does provide a handful of enjoyably bizarre moments.

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Single, middle-aged best friends Barb (Annie Mumolo) and Star (Kristen Wiig) spend their days working together in Nebraska, chatting to each other endlessly and often to the annoyance of those around them. After a bad break, the two begin to feel that they’ve lost their spark in life. They decide to leave their comfort zone and visit wild and exotic Vista Del Mar, Fla. Little do they know that a pale-skinned supervillain (also played by one of the stars) has made sinister plans from her secret base to wipe out the entire town during the upcoming Seafood Jam Celebration. When the oblivious Barb and Star strike up a close relationship with the evil mastermind’s lovelorn accomplice, Edgar (Jamie Dornan), the new friendship adds tension to their personal relationship and potential danger.

One of the most immediately striking things about this production is how colorful it is. This is an amusingly loud film in which every garish shirt seems to explode off the screen. Even in the opening number set in Nebraska, the neighborhood colors literally pop. The visuals continue during the elaborate musical numbers later in the film, which feature cast members and hotel staff dancing and singing in the lobby.

As for the songs themselves, the highlight may actually come during Edgar’s ode to seagulls in the sand. This bit includes some funny lyrics and entertainingly fake-looking prop birds.

Of course, the leads are essential to this story and co-stars Mumolo and Wiig have excellent onscreen rapport. The performers seem to improvise and the asides and odd non-sequiturs from the leads often result in a chuckle. The movie also isn’t afraid to go on some complete tangents. There are some rambling discussions about the characters’ troubled pasts and plays on romance film clichés, but some bits do lend unpredictability to the proceedings.

There are plenty of head-scratching, weird moments that are a surprise even if they’re over in a flash and only referred to again in passing.

Alas, this is a movie packed with jokes and there are just as many blunt gags that don’t hit the mark. The story focuses on the relationship between Barb and Star and naturally this is important in order for audiences to relate to the leads. However, one can’t help but think that the villain and her young helper Yoyo (Reyn Doi) could have been more directly involved in the funny business. They’re kept at a significant distance for the first two acts of the story, which is unfortunate given the strong impression they make early on.

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The climax itself isn't quite as grand, exciting or funny as it could have been if the foes had played a larger role onsite setting it all up.

This movie encourages its middle-aged leads to step out of their comfort zone and experience new things. Clearly, the writers and stars of *Barb & Star Go to Vista Del Mar* have attempted to do the same with this comedic endeavor. In the end, their efforts are admirable, if uneven. However, if you need extra comedy in your life or are yearning for a brief escape to a colorful locale, you may still get a chuckle or two out of this trip.

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