

Film Review: J.J. Abrams Finds Magic in Wonderful 'Super 8'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on June 8, 2011 - 9:26am

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CHICAGO – J.J. Abrams' "Super 8" comes to theaters this week shrouded in mystery, nostalgia, and expectation. What do the aliens look like? How will it pay homage to the works of Steven Spielberg that so clearly inspired it? And will the merging of two filmmakers amplify their flaws or underline their strengths? I've rarely been happier to report that "Super 8" is a success on every level, whether you've seen the films that it echoes or not. Halfway through "Super 8" I stopped thinking about the films that inspired Abrams to make it and started envisioning the works that would be inspired by THIS movie. Yes, it's that good.



Rating: **5.0/5.0**

Because so much of the joy of "Super 8" is in the way it unfolds, this review will be completely devoid of significant spoilers, but even those wouldn't ruin the movie. Just as the red matter in "Star Trek" or the secrets of the island in "Lost" weren't the keys to the success of those J. J. Abrams properties, the action in "Super 8" isn't nearly as important as what it develops in the young characters. "Super 8" is a film about letting go, growing up, falling in love, and fatherhood. It is a coming-of-age film disguised as a summer alien movie. Just as Spielberg's best films merge relatable humanity with the unimaginable (aliens, giant sharks, etc.), "Super 8" is a movie about a runaway alien in which the viewer starts caring more about the people involved than the creatures they encounter. In many ways, that may be its most remarkable accomplishment.



[Read Brian Tallerico's full review of "Super 8" in our reviews section.](#) [16]

Just as with "E.T." and "Close Encounters," the human leads are essential to the film's success and this time it's a group of kids led by the charismatic Joel Courtney and future superstar Elle Fanning. Courtney plays Joe Lamb, a movie-obsessed young man who recently lost his mother and is distant from his father (Kyle Chandler of "Friday Night Lights"), who happens to be the Deputy of the small town in which the entirety of the film takes place. Joe gets together with his buddies and makes super 8 movies inspired by the works of George A. Romero that are directed by the outgoing Charles (Riley Griffiths). Martin (Gabriel Basso), Preston (Zach Mills), and Cary (Ryan Lee) are also wannabe filmmakers but everything changes when Charles asks the prettiest girl at school, Alice Dainard (Elle Fanning), to play the wife of their zombie-hunting detective. Joe and Alice immediately become close friends, much to the chagrin of their fathers (Ron Eldard plays Louis Dainard) for reasons that I will not spoil here.



[Continue reading for Brian Tallerico's full "Super 8" review.](#) [16]

"Super 8" stars Joel Courtney, Elle Fanning, Kyle Chandler, Ron Eldard, Riley Griffiths, Gabriel Basso, Zach Mills, and Ryan Lee. It was written and directed by J.J. Abrams and opens on June 10th, 2011 but you can see it a day early with a special sneak preview (go [here](#) [17] for all the details.)



Super 8

Photo credit: Paramount Pictures

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