

Film Review: Aardman Studios Offers a Merry ‘Arthur Christmas’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on November 23, 2011 - 4:55pm

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CHICAGO – Aardman Studios, the creators of the irrepressible “Wallace & Gromit” and the witty “Flushed Away” is back with another animated holiday treat, “Arthur Christmas.” Santa Claus and the gang are taken into the modern era, but the cheeky lads/lasses at Aardman can’t help but throw in a bit of whimsy and heart.



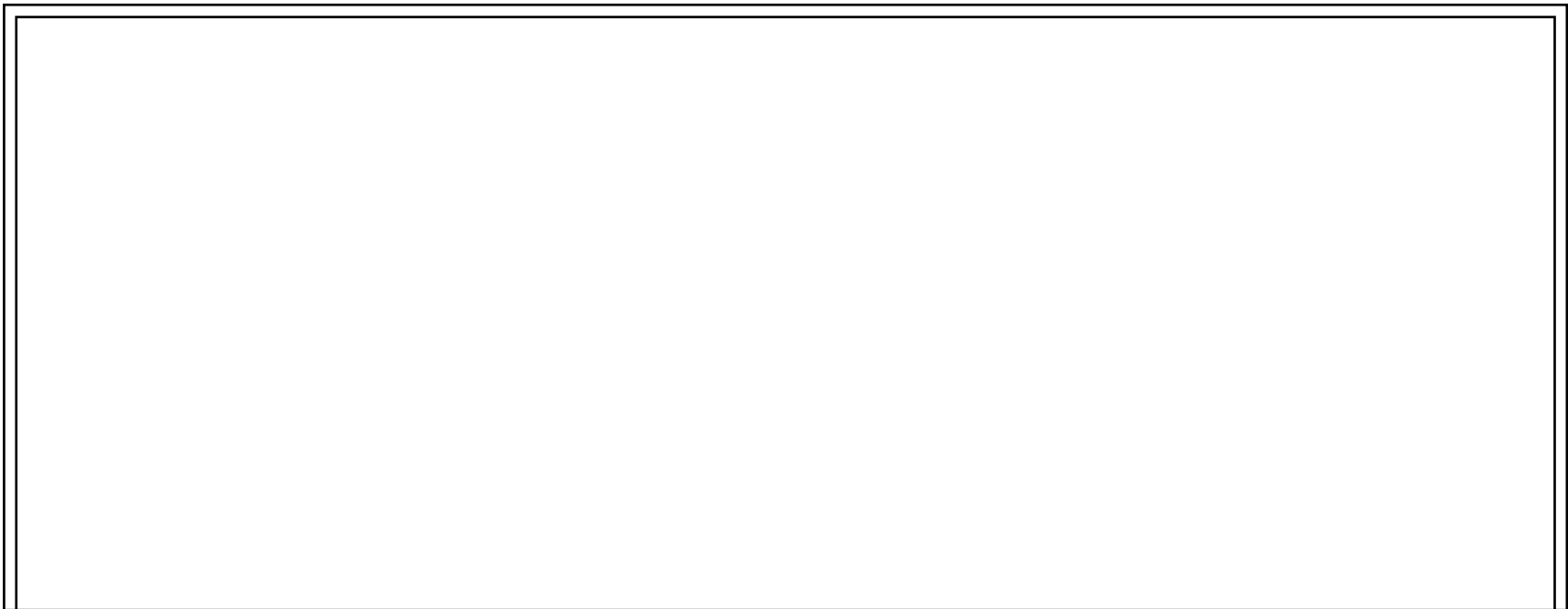
This is a British film, with a British point-of-view. Santa Claus is also Father Christmas, and he is given a back story and a family that adds to the legend. There is a British tactile efficiency to the North Pole set-up, which begins with a child’s letter to Santa, asking the questions like, “how do you deliver all those toys in just one night?” Despite the stiff upper lip, the Aardman Studios know where the heart is, and delivers glorious holiday spirit in a winningly fun story.

“Arthur Christmas” (voice of James McAvoy) is actually Santa’s son. His hapless manner gets him bounced around Santa Claus, Inc., until he is reduced to answering the children’s letters to the big guy (Jim Broadbent). The brains behind the toy delivery operation is Arthur’s older brother Steve (Hugh Laurie), and what an operation it is. The elves are utilized almost as mercenary soldiers, shimmying down ropes from a giant starship, “S-1.” The real and aging Santa (there is a lineage) is merely a figurehead on the journey. It is assumed that Steve will take the reins for the next Yule.

Complications arise in the wee hours of Christmas Day, when only one of the billions of toys delivered doesn’t make it to its little girl recipient. This seems okay to the statistically oriented Steve, but not to the sentimentally imbued Arthur. He enlists the Grandsanta (Bill Nighy, the Santa before the current one) and kicks it old school with a sleigh, flying reindeer and Bryony (Ashley Jensen), an elf expert in wrapping presents. This of course puts a wrench into the efficiencies, and the Santa operation must find a way to adapt.

“Arthur Christmas” opens everywhere on November 23rd. Featuring the voices of James McAvoy, Hugh Laurie, Jim Broadbent, Imelda Staunton, Laura Linney, Michael Palin, Joan Cusack, Ashley Jensen and Bill Nighy. Screenplay by Peter Baynham and Sarah Smith, directed by Sarah Smith. Rated “PG”

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In the Teeth of the Holiday: Arthur (voice of James McAvoy) and Grandsanta (Bill Nighy) in ‘Arthur Christmas’
Photo credit: Aardman Animations for Sony Pictures Animation

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