Film Review: ‘The Book of Life’ Has Uninspired Tale to Tell

Submitted by PatrickMcD [1] on October 16, 2014 - 11:55pm

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CHICAGO – Unfortunately you can’t judge “The Book Of Life” by its cover. The movie draws on the fertile imagery of the Mexican “Day Of The Dead” to create its own animated world. The animation is excellent and the wooden characters seem to spring to life – but those performances are as wooden as a board. Which also describes my feelings for most of this uninspired journey…bored.



Rating: **2.5/5.0**

The film doesn’t have the courage to go its own way, instead it uses the window dressing of its distinctive look to paper over a story that is firmly stuck in the material world of mediocrity. Trouble begins from the onset with an uninspired framing device involving grade school slackers touring a museum and learning about the Mexican cultural traditions – complete with a map showing Mexico with a giant bandito mustache. These modern characters seem to have been inspired by the BRATZ dolls with grotesquely oversized heads.

In the brief prologue describing the “Day Of The Dead,” the loved ones of families on earth either reside in the land of the remembered (which is a sort of heavenly limbo) or the land of the forgotten (which is as dark and depressing as a corner of hell). These two worlds are ruled over by a bickering spirit couple La Muerte and Xibalba (Kate de Catillo and Ron Perlman). Viewing two best friends Joaquin and Monolo (Diego Luna and Channing Tatum) playing in the street with their friend Maria (Zoe Saldana), they make a bet over which boy will grow up to marry her.

“The Book Of Life” opens everywhere October 17th in 3D and regular screenings. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring the voices of Diego Luna, Channing Tatum, Zoe Saldana, Ron Perlman, Kate Del Castilo, Christina Applegate, Hector Elizondo, Cheech Marin, Ice Cube, Placido Domingo, Danny Trejo and Gabriel Iglesias. Screenplay written and directed by Jorge R. Gutierrez. Rated “PG”

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The Animated Cast of ‘The Book of Life’
Photo credit: 20th Century Fox

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