

Film Review: Tartan Prancer – Yes, a Fictional Albanian Car – Steals the Otherwise Borrowed Show in ‘Vacation’

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CHICAGO – Retreads from classics are often as weary as having to write that they are almost never as good as the original. And here we go again with the Ed Helms-led “Vacation,” which fails to capitalize on the beloved Chevy Chase film “National Lampoon’s Vacation” from 1983.



Rating: **2.5/5.0**

Lacking the soul and whimsy of the original, this modern-day take on the Harold Ramis and John Hughes classic attempts to recreate the charm with actors who know how to read the lines but don’t embody the characters. And they’re forced to speak within a lazily written story that doesn’t add enough to justify coming back.

The decision by Ed Helms to take his family to Walley World – just like his father (Chevy Chase) did with his family – feels forced for the film to have a reason for being. It feels like it went down like this: “Hey, there was a cool film from 1983. Let’s do the same thing, but since Chevy Chase is older, he’ll be the grandpa now and we’ll just have his son trace the same steps.”

The film lacks originality, is uninspired and fails to summon the allure of its source material. Instead, laughs pretty much only come from two other places: a fictional car and a foul-mouthed kid. Kudos for those two, but that’s not enough to justify trying to make new money on an already done-perfectly plot from 1983.



[Read Adam Fendelman’s full review of “Vacation”.](#) [26]

Instead of taking his family to the same cabin they’re all bored with, Ed Helms as Rusty Griswold – a fitting name describing his comedy here – decides to spice things up. He wants to drive across the country and return to Walley World just as his father, Clark, did with his family decades earlier. The journey there, of course, goes awry and the film focuses on the goofs to try to make you laugh.

Things start very promising with an act of genius comedy: the fictional creation of an Albanian car called the Tartan Prancer. The car literally does everything you wouldn’t want an automobile to do. It has a huge key fob with mysteriously random buttons. While driving, the driver’s seat turns to the rear (that’s dangerous).

“Vacation” stars Ed Helms, Christina Applegate, Steele Stebbins, Skyler Gisondo, Chris Hemsworth, Leslie Mann, Chevy Chase, Beverly D’Angelo, Charlie Day, Ron Livingston, Norman Reedus, Keegan-Michael Key, Regina Hall, Tim Heidecker, Nick Kroll, Kaitlin Olson and

Michael Peña from writers and directors John Francis Daley and Jonathan M. Goldstein. The film, which has a running time of 99 minutes and opens on July 29, 2015, is rated “R” for crude and sexual content and language throughout and brief graphic nudity.

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Ed Helms as Rusty Griswold with the Tartan Prancer in “Vacation”.
Image credit: Hopper Stone, Warner Bros.

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