

Blu-Ray Review: 'G-Force' Offers Jerry Bruckheimer Lobotomy For Kids

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CHICAGO – Here's one of the year's lamest excuses for children's entertainment. Like "Shorts" and "Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs," it assumes that young minds crave little more than frantic and shrill zaniness. Producer Jerry Bruckheimer views kids in the same way he views adults: as human guinea pigs in need of being dumbed down.

Like his equally abysmal "Kangaroo Jack," "G-Force" is an adult action comedy that just happens to feature animated characters. In its theatrical format, the film pushed the boundaries of 3D effects, culminating in an experience as headache-inducing and empty headed as James Cameron's "Avatar." Its 2D presentation on Blu-ray is vastly preferable, though the film still amounts to little more than a cynical exercise in special effects technology, complete with awful dialogue, uninspired animation and a script assembled out of the most audience-insulting cliches.



Blu-Ray Rating: **1.5/5.0**

First-time feature director Hoyt Yeatman is Bruckheimer's longtime visual effects supervisor. Yeatman's son dreamed up the seemingly cute premise: an elite team of highly trained guinea pigs attempt to save the world. Yet the filmmakers develop this concept like any other spy thriller plot line, complete with technical jargon that kids couldn't care less about (A microchip with military applications? A PDA infected with an extermination virus? Seriously??). The chief villain is Leonard Saber (Bill Nighy), a Bruckheimer-like billionaire with a fiendish plan for world domination. His line of electronics are programmed to come alive and attack civilians (think "Maximum Overdrive" meets "Transformers"). There's really nothing kid-friendly about the entire production, aside from some tacked-on bathroom humor.



Sam Rockwell voices a highly trained guinea pig in Hoyt Yeatman's highly unbearable G-Force.

Photo credit: Walt Disney Home Entertainment

The guinea pigs were designed by Sony Pictures Imageworks, a studio far more gifted at visual effects than character animation. None of the pigs harbor persuasive personalities, and are merely placeholders for distractingly recognizable voice actors. As the lone mole, Nicholas Cage is the only cast member who delivers an actual performance, instead of relying on his familiar persona. Among the wasted live action actors is the marvelous oddball comic Zach Galifianakis, whose mere presence in this trash is as maddening as David Cross's participation in "Alvin and the Chipmunks." Everything about the script (by "National Treasure" scribes, The Wibberleys), feels painfully forced. There's not a plot thread that doesn't feel wholly derivative, from the buddy comedy pairing of two rodents, to the abbreviated backstory of a key bad guy. Most of the gags are tired cultural references that wouldn't get a laugh on "Late Night" (one female pig quips, "I look like Paris Hilton's chihuahua").



G-Force was released on Blu-Ray and DVD on December 15th, 2009.

Photo credit: Walt Disney Home Entertainment

Like Cameron, Bruckheimer routinely puts special effects before story. The key difference between the two formidably powerful filmmakers is that Cameron usually knows how to make his technological leaps pay off dramatically. His sinking of the Titanic was profoundly effective, whereas Bruckheimer's attack on Pearl Harbor simply looked cool. As a technologic experiment, "G-Force" is cluttered and unremarkable. As entertainment, it is a charmless, witless bore, bursting with sparkling CG debris that resembles the brain matter of viewers tricked into seeing it. Here's hoping that there's no squeakquel in the works.

"G-Force" is presented in 1080p High Definition (with a 2.40:1 aspect ratio), and accompanied by English, French and Spanish audio tracks. The three-disc edition also includes a DVD and digital copy of the film. On Blu-ray, the film can be viewed with "Cine-Explore" commentary, which provides plentiful behind-the-scenes footage (the stick puppets used for the pig stand-ins are about as expressive as their animated counterparts). Galifianakis is only allowed to be funny in the film's minute-long blooper reel (his reaction to the mole's supposed death: "Will it be an open shoebox?"). In various making-of featurettes, Bruckheimer pops up to discuss the importance of storytelling and his efforts to strive for heart in his movies. He sounds as convincing as Saber did when he talked about family and the importance of communication. The filmmakers of "G-Force" certainly have no interest in communicating with children.

'G-Force' is released by Walt Disney Home Entertainment and stars Bill Nighy, Will Arnett and Zach Galifianakis. It features the voices of Sam Rockwell, Jon Favreau, Penelope Cruz, Tracy Morgan and Nicholas Cage. It was written by Cormac Wibberley & Marianne Wibberley and directed by Hoyt H. Yeatman, Jr. It was released on December 15th, 2009. It is rated PG.



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