

Lazy, Uninspired 'Shrek Forever After' With Mike Myers, Cameron Diaz

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on May 21, 2010 - 1:52pm

- [Antonio Banderas](#) [2]
- [Brian Tallerico](#) [3]
- [Cameron Diaz](#) [4]
- [Darren Lake](#) [5]
- [Eddie Murphy](#) [6]
- [Josh Klausner](#) [7]
- [Mike Mitchell](#) [8]
- [Mike Myers](#) [9]
- [Movie Review](#) [10]
- [Shrek](#) [11]
- [Shrek Forever After](#) [12]
- [Walt Dohrn](#) [13]



Rating: **1.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – The laziest big budget film of the year, “Shrek Forever After” is the worst kind of family entertainment in that it relies solely on the goodwill engendered by the hit movies that came before to not only get audience members in seats this weekend but to sell them toys, video games, and tickets to amusement parks.

Last year was a landmark one for animation with films like “Coraline,” “Up,” and “The Princess and the Frog” proving that the medium had a wealth of storytelling possibilities that wouldn’t merely result in commercials for other products or films. The pattern continued into early 2010 with the spectacular “How to Train Your Dragon,” one of the most beautiful movies of the year to date.



Shrek (Mike Myers) and His New Nemesis, Rumpelstiltskin (Walt Dohrn).

Photo credit: DreamWorks

Perhaps without the recent high quality output in mainstream animation, I wouldn’t be as aggravated by the sheer, unadulterated laziness at the heart of “Shrek Forever After,” not just the worst film in this franchise but the worst high profile work in a long time. With the depth and complexity of the animated films of 2009, why do we have to suffer through a piece that doesn’t seem as creatively inspired as the TV special “Shrek the Halls”? Every frame of this film reeks of a project that has been conceived and executed merely to fulfill the bare minimum to get audiences into seats. They know that if they tell a few jokes and bring back the characters you love, that you’ll pay to see it. Actual creativity requires too much effort. Fans of all ages deserve better.

The plot of “Shrek Forever After” is essentially a riff on “It’s a Wonderful Life” spun into more of a midlife crisis story for Shrek (Mike Myers). The big green guy longs for the day when his roar struck fear into the hearts of the townsfolk instead of just serving as a party trick. Domesticity can be tough on any man but it seems especially hard on Shrek to go from fearsome creature into exhausted father.

Rumpelstiltskin (Walt Dohrn) happens upon Shrek in a moment of crisis and moves in for the nefarious kill. He offers Shrek one day of old-fashioned rabble-rousing ogre chaos in exchange for an already-passed day of Shrek’s life. Thinking that he can sow his oats one final time before going back to changing diapers, Shrek takes the deal and never considers that the pint-sized dealmaker could take the day that Shrek was born.



Shrek (Mike Myers) and Donkey (Eddie Murphy) Off on a New Adventure.

Photo credit: DreamWorks

Shrek wakes up in a world where he was never born and it turns out that Far Far Away is a much different place without the love affair between Fiona (Cameron Diaz) and Shrek. This alternate universe features a Donkey (Eddie Murphy) who is a mere pack mule, an obese Puss N Boots (Antonio Banderas), a King Rumpelstiltskin, and a Fiona who lives underground and leads her ogre in a daily battle against a corrupt leader and his cadre of witches. Shrek has until sunrise to enact the contract’s loophole, finding “True Love’s Kiss” once more and returning life to normal.

Clearly, it’s not a bad concept. The “Shrek” movies have always been about how beauty is in the eye of the beholder and it’s consistent to tell a story about a character not seeing the beauty in his family life and longing for the old days. But the cleverness stops with the concept. There’s not one clever line, visual joke, or surprising plot twist. “Shrek Forever After” simply isn’t funny. “Shrek the Third” had its problems, but it was a laugh riot compared to this boring affair.

And the laziness doesn’t stop with the script. You can almost sense the contractual obligation in Myers’ and Murphy’s line readings, as if they were merely counting their money when they recorded their parts. They can’t muster the energy to bring these characters to life any more. The film is even visually inert. The 3D adds a dim, gray layer to a film that is mostly set in a colorless world. The result is a piece where even the visuals seem as half-conceived as the jokes.

“Shrek Forever After” has often been referred to as “Shrek: The Final Chapter” and the title has alternated a few times. Personally, I like the second choice as it at least hints that this affair could be the nail in the coffin of a franchise that has gone from creative to merely commercial.

‘Shrek Forever After’ features voice work by Mike Myers, Cameron Diaz, Eddie Murphy, Walt Dohrn, and Antonio Banderas. It was written by Josh Klausner & Darren Lemke and directed by Mike Mitchell. It opened on May 21st, 2010. It is rated PG.



[14]

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