

Steven Spielberg's Disappointing 'The Adventures of Tintin'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on December 20, 2011 - 4:57pm

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Rating: **2.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – Being a huge Steven Spielberg fan and a pretty big aficionado of Peter Jackson (who produced) as well, I was pretty psyched to see what these two undeniable geniuses could do in the world of motion-capture animation with their collaboration on the adaptation of the hit Herge cartoon "The Adventures of Tintin." That's why it hurts me to say that, excepting a few stand-out action scenes, this is a shockingly dull affair, something that lulled me to sleep far more often than it inspired my imagination to life. Hardcore fans of the series may be satisfied and the film has been a juggernaut overseas where the source material is more popular (it's made \$239 million already worldwide), but I guess something is just lost in translation for this critic.

As I mentioned, I really wanted to like "Tintin." After a jaunty opening credits sequence scored to a jazzy composition by, of course, John Williams, the action of the piece kicks in as we meet the intrepid title character (voiced and mo-capped by Jamie Bell) and his loyal canine companion. Tintin seems like an engaging chap, the kind of wide-eyed protagonist to follow on a globe-trotting adventure. Sadly, he takes a back seat almost immediately to what is basically a non-stop action kid's movie that becomes monotonous in its breakneck rhythm. Character, humor, whimsy, invention – there's no time when Spielberg, Jackson and his team are busy crafting the next set piece.



The Adventures of Tintin
Photo credit: Paramount

Falling into the timeless young adult model that any action could start an amazing adventure, "The Adventure of Tintin: The Secret of the Unicorn" kicks off when the title character buys a model of an old ship at a flea market. Before he can finish looking at it, people are trying to buy or steal it from him, including an American (Joe Starr) who warns him of danger and our nefarious ne'er-do-well, Sakharine (Daniel Craig). Before long it is revealed that the model ship hides a clue to not only the secret history of the seafaring vessel on which it was based but the path to a hidden fortune.

The journey begins on a ship guided by Archibald Haddock (Andy Serkis, in another inspired bit of motion capture performance), a drunkard who it is revealed is the last living relative of the former Captain of the Unicorn, Sir Francis Haddock. Through investigation, Tintin and Haddock discover that three clues were hidden in Unicorn models that would lead them to the buried treasure. Their quest takes them to Morocco and the city of Bagghar and even brings in the skills of Interpol agents Thomson and Thomson (Simon Pegg and Nick Frost in a clever bit of casting that nonetheless fails to provide anything particularly humorous). Can Tintin help Haddock return glory to his family name, uncover the secret of the Unicorn, and become rich in the process?

There are sequences in "The Adventures of Tintin" that simply couldn't be pulled off in a live-action film. In particular, there's a dam-breaking scene in Morocco that is nearly jaw-dropping, especially in 3D. Spielberg loves to swing his camera down mountains, through small holes and windows, over ships and buildings. The best thing about "Tintin" is the filmmaking inspiration he clearly sees in the ability to track even Tintin's dog in ways that he otherwise wouldn't be able to do. It's fun to see one of our greatest filmmakers finding new ways to express himself.



The Adventures of Tintin
Photo credit: Paramount

Sadly, film is always about story and all the camera and mo-cap tricks in the world can't disguise the fact that there simply isn't much of one here. The script by Stephen Moffat, Edgar Wright, & Joe Cornish is heavy on set pieces but light on everything else. I'm sorry to his legion of fans around the world but Tintin, at least as he's presented here, is boring. I get that he's basically the straight man in his fiction – it's the chaos of what goes on around him that differentiates one adventure from the next – but it's easier to ignore the fact that he's a boring hero on the page than it is on the big screen. He's a blank, an adventurer with little sense of wonder.

And that's what's missing from Spielberg's film overall. I wanted that whoa factor, the awe that so many of his other works (and the best modern family films) have provided several generations. It's just missing here. It's like a video game cut scene — it might look good, but it doesn't inspire you to play in its world. Just sit back and watch. And try not to fall asleep.

"The Adventures of Tintin" features voice/mo-cap work by Jamie Bell, Andy Serkis, Daniel Craig, Cary Elwes, Toby Jones, Simon Pegg, & Nick Frost. It was adapted from the Herge cartoon by Stephen Moffat, Edgar Wright, & Joe Cornish and directed by Steven Spielberg. It will be released on December 21st, 2011.



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