Don’t Buy Ticket For ‘Journey 2: The Mysterious Island’

Submitted by BrianTT [1] on February 10, 2012 - 12:53pm

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Rating: 1/5

CHICAGO – If you hear an unusual sound this weekend, it may be Jules Verne, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Jonathan Swift spinning in their graves. The writers who have become an essential part of any growing person’s library have now been associated with a piece of 3D junk that insults the intelligence of everyone who sees it. “Journey 2: The Mysterious Island” is not a trip worth taking.

I know what some of you are already thinking. I’m being too hard on it. It’s a kid’s movie. It’s 3D fun and if it introduces some great authors to another generation than this cynical critic is being predictably belligerent. I wish I could agree. I would love to support a “dumbed down” version of classic fiction that might get young viewers doing something that seems increasingly uncommon – cracking a book. But does it have to be this far down? And this dumb? There’s a way to make a movie like “The Mysterious Island” that appeals to people who know the work of Verne and those more excited by seeing The Rock or Vanessa Hudgens. But “Journey 2” insults them all with horrendous writing, cheap effects, and silly storytelling. It turns brilliance into nonsense.

Journey 2: The Mysterious Island

Photo credit: Sony Pictures

Sean (Josh Hutcherson) still remembers the crazy journey he took with his dad in “Journey to the Center of the Earth” but pop is missing in action (it’s hard to say what Brendan Fraser had to do that was better but maybe he finally came to his senses in terms of paycheck roles after “Furry Vengeance”) leaving stepdad Hank (Dwayne Johnson) to struggle with the troubled teen, who really wants nothing to do with him. As the film opens, Sean has just received a message that he believes is from a Vernian (someone who, like Sean, believes that the works of Jules Verne were non-fiction). Hank helps him translate the message, which reveals that the location of the legendary mysterious island of Verne’s book has been found. Time for an adventure!

Before you can say, “Doesn’t this kid have to go to school,” the pair are off to Palau, where they hire a helicopter piloted by the aggressively
annoying Gabato (Luis Guzman) and his gorgeous daughter Kailani (Vanessa Hudgens). The quartet fly into a hurricane and crash land on the legendary island, where they find Sean’s grandfather Alexander (Michael Caine). Before they can get accustomed to the tricks of the island, they discover it’s sinking, and so the whole movie becomes an escape mission. Go to the island, get off the island, try to do something interesting on the journey.

After a few references to Verne, Swift, and Stevenson, here’s the level of intellect in “Journey 2: The Mysterious Island” – “Don’t forget the drill – be careful.” That’s the drill. Be careful. I know I’m nitpicking but it’s an example of how silly and thin the plotting and dialogue are in this mess of a script. Here’s my impression of most of “Journey 2” – “Hey, we need something. Look! There’s what we need.” There’s so little brainpower on display, especially as Hank takes what feels like a lifetime teaching Sean how to “pop his pecs,” that I think the movie could actually make people dumber. Make sure if you take your kids that you make them read Verne after as intellectual cleansing.

It’s not just the plotting, poor Luis Guzman suffers one of the worst-written characters in years as the usually-stellar character actor falls victim to awful humor that features him getting pooped on by a giant bird, wearing a shirt several sizes too small, and falling as often as possible. Even kids will hope Gabato falls into some deadly part of the island (although that’s not meant to imply that there’s EVER a sense of actual danger in this safe and generic action movie). This is one of those movies where adults are all hero (Hank) or all moron (Gabato) and there’s little in-between. Hutcherson and Hudgens make it out unscathed in terms of acting but even they start to look bored.

And that’s the film’s biggest sin. It’s just dull. The 3D is uninspired. The action features no surprises. It’s a movie that takes people to a legendary mysterious island and does almost nothing interesting there. They ride bees and see giant spiders, but none of it has that visual wow that it needs to in order to be memorable. After “Cats & Dogs: The Revenge of Kitty Galore” and “Journey 2: The Mysterious Island,” director Brad Peyton has become the kind of 3D family movie sequels that nobody asked for. I expect Peyton’s “Agent Cody Banks 3D” to be announced any day now.

“Journey 2: The Mysterious Island” stars Dwayne Johnson, Josh Hutcherson, Luis Guzman, Vanessa Hudgens, and Michael Caine. It was directed by Brad Peyton and hits theaters on February 10th, 2012. It is rated PG.