

## ‘Hotel Transylvania’ Proves Hyper Isn’t Always Funny

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 19, 2012 - 4:01pm

- [Adam Sandler](#) [2]
- [Andy Samberg](#) [3]
- [Brian Tallerico](#) [4]
- [CeeLo Green](#) [5]
- [David Spade](#) [6]
- [Fran Drescher](#) [7]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [8]
- [Hotel Transylvania](#) [9]
- [Jon Lovitz](#) [10]
- [Kevin James](#) [11]
- [Molly Shannon](#) [12]
- [Movie Review](#) [13]
- [Selena Gomez](#) [14]
- [Steve Buscemi](#) [15]



Rating: **2.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – It was probably just a matter of time. With the current vampire craze dominating pop culture in flicks like “The Twilight Saga” and shows like “True Blood,” it was inevitable that creatures of the night be turned into family entertainment. Even “Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein” was recently released on Blu-ray and Universal is about to unleash a whole set of HD monster movie classics. Monsters are hip. “Hotel Transylvania” does its best to put a nail in that coffin.

With its manic style, hyperactive visuals, and 3rd-grade sense of humor, I was annoyed by “Hotel Transylvania” from the very beginning, and while the movie definitely improves as it goes along, it never completely won me back. The opening scenes of “Hotel Transylvania” are just loud, obnoxious, and filled with either gross-out jokes or repeated statement of the movie’s set-up to the point that even eight-year-olds will yell, “WE GET IT!”



Hotel Transylvania

Photo credit: Sony Pictures

That set-up that is repeated roughly 400 times is that monsters are more afraid of humans than the other way around. Over and OVER again, we hear about how Dracula (Adam Sandler) has created a safe haven for monsters to feel protected against the pitchfork and torch-wielding villagers. Dracula lives and runs the titular location, which basically serves as a protective bubble for his daughter Mavis (Selena Gomez), who Drac refuses to allow out into the real world. If you fell asleep after a double feature of “Bram Stoker’s Dracula” and “The Village,” you might dream this up. (Although that movie would be a lot more fun.)

Dear old daddy Drac decides to throw a massive party for Mavis on her 118th birthday. The occasion brings out all of Dracula’s buddies,



including Frankenstein (Kevin James), his wife Eunice (Fran Drescher), a werewolf named Wayne (Steve Buscemi), the werewolf’s better half Wanda (Molly Shannon), Griffin the Invisible Man (David Spade), Murray the Mummy (CeeLo Green), and countless others. At the same time, a human named Jonathan (Andy Samberg) stumbles on the scene for the first time and not only disrupts Dracula’s overprotective party planning but falls in love with Mavis.



Hotel Transylvania

*Photo credit: Sony Pictures*

For the first act, nearly everything in “Hotel Transylvania” is a visual gag. Look, Bigfoot is so big we only see his foot! Look, Frankenstein can still fart even when he doesn’t have a head! Look, the werewolf family includes about 45 kids who pee, scratch, and destroy everything in sight. The housekeeping staff is comprised of witches. The bellhops are zombies. The “Do Not Disturb” tags are shrunken heads. The hotel chef is Quasimodo (Jon Lovitz). It is meant to be visual overload and it will work on that level for some of the most attention deficient youngsters. For their parents and guardians, the pure manic nature of this set-up is likely to annoy. It kind of sent me into a numb state right about when Frankenstein’s flatulence was turned into a green flame that shot across the lobby. There’s nothing smart here. Nothing that you and your friends couldn’t devise given the concept. And the pop culture jokes (like repeated playing of LMFAO) just add a layer of desperation. This is not joke writing. This is sensory assault.

To be fair, things do calm down a bit well into the second act when the characters have all been introduced and the film can focus on Dracula trying to decide whether or not to allow Jonathan to “zing” with his daughter. And the climactic scenes of the Dracula crew racing through town are kind of fun. They’re the inspired stuff that one assumes co-writer Robert Smigel (of “Saturday Night Live” fame) was probably directly involved in creating. The gross-out jokes and pop culture riffs? Probably not.



Hotel Transylvania

*Photo credit: Sony Pictures*

As for the voice work, it's a mixed bag. Sandler is, in typical fashion, trying way too hard and he passes his LOUDER, GOOFIER, STUPIDER aesthetic on to Samberg who is nearly as annoying. Most of the supporting cast is more effective but that could be just because I'm just so tired of the Sandler silly voice club. It never works. Didn't work on "SNL." Didn't work in "Little Nicky." Doesn't work here. James, Gomez, Buscemi, even Green are much funnier and more consistently entertaining.

In the end, "Hotel Transylvania" is a disappointing film because there are glimpses in the final half hour of what it could have been without so much desperately over-cooked comedy. We love movie monsters. We always have and we always will. Although I love them a little less now than I did earlier this week.

*"Hotel Transylvania" features voice work by Adam Sandler, Andy Samberg, Selena Gomez, Steve Buscemi, Kevin James, Molly Shannon, Fran Drescher, David Spade, CeeLo Green, and Jon Lovitz. It was written by Peter Baynham and Robert Smigel and directed by Genndy Tartakovsky. It is rated PG and opens on September 28, 2012.*



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