

‘Dolphin Tale 2’ is Fantastic Family Entertainment

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on September 12, 2014 - 10:15am

- [Ashley Judd](#) [2]
- [Charles Martin Smith](#) [3]
- [Cozi Zuehlsdorff](#) [4]
- [Dolphin Tale 2](#) [5]
- [Harry Connick Jr.](#) [6]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [7]
- [Kris Kristofferson](#) [8]
- [Morgan Freeman](#) [9]
- [Movie Review](#) [10]
- [Nathan Gamble](#) [11]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [12]
- [Warner Bros.](#) [13]



Rating: **4.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – They don’t come along often, the rare fun-for-the-whole-family film. But “Dolphin Tale 2” fits that description perfectly, throws in some idealistic symbolism, and more importantly follows those symbols through to the end.

Yes, this is “inspired by a true story,” yet it’s not too far off from the real circumstances – it’s simply a hyper-realized version of the story. The dolphin named Winter, as we learned from the first film, was found in a net with its tail cut off. The Marine Biology institute nursed it back to health, and created a prosthetic appendage – much like a artificial limb for humans – so Winter could frolic anew. “Dolphin Tale 2” is a continuation of this inspiration, and writer/director Charles Martin Smith imbues the story with symbols of transition, for both the dolphins and human beings. This follows through to a glorious conclusion, uplifting and amazingly probable. That kind of truth works “for the whole family.”

The story begins a couple years after the first film. The dolphin named Winter is working nicely with an artificial tail, which was fashioned by a marine doctor named Cameron McCarthy (Morgan Freeman). The Marine Biology institute is still run by Clay Haskett (Harry Connick Jr.) and facilitated by his mid-teenage daughter Hazel (Cozi Zuehlsdorff). The teenage discoverer of Winter, Sawyer (Nathan Gamble), works at the facility as a leadership intern, and is now well versed in Dolphin-ology.



Hazel (Cozi Zuehlsdorff) and Sawyer (Nathan Gamble) of ‘Dolphin Tale 2’

Photo credit: Warner Bros.

Everything changes when Winter’s dolphin companion passes away, and she is left without a partner. The search for a new dolphin is

complicated by the federal government, whose rules specifically state that Winter must be paired, or face transfer. Sawyer, in the meantime, is given the opportunity to leave home to study advance Marine Biology. There is tremendous pressure on all, until a baby dolphin washes up on shore, and is given the appropriate name of Hope.

Charles Martin Smith, a veteran actor, writer and director, takes complete control of this story, and it shows in every frame. The theme is transition, the change that inevitably happens to everyone. Symbolically, he uses the plight of the dolphins to mirror the plight of the humans. While Sawyer decides what he wants to do, there is a support system like his mother (Ashley Judd) and Morgan Freeman’s curmudgeonly doctor, who dispenses some sound advice about lifetimes and how fast they go.

The young actors are spot on, and are really – along with the dolphins – the focus and energy of the film. They are transitioning to adulthood, with all the teenage crushes thrown in, and gratefully it’s all handled as innocence and baby steps, which for most people is their adolescent experience. Director Martin slyly uses water as a baptismal element for teenage discovery, and the actors Cozi Zuehlsdorff and Nathan Gamble even get to do a direct “Blue Lagoon” underwater dance.

The principle cast from the first film is back, completely intact, which says something about their commitment to the story and the director. Ashley Judd, Harry Connick Jr., Kris Kristofferson and Morgan Freeman use their star power and acting ability to sell the family film, probably as a tribute to their own families. There is also moneyman for the institute (Tom Nowicki), who looks like Richard Branson of Virgin Airlines. This is always welcome in a family entertainment.



Hazel with Her Dad Clay (Harry Connick Jr.) and Dr. McCarthy (Morgan Freeman) in ‘Dolphin Tale 2’

Photo credit: Warner Bros.

But what really puts the film in “cut above” territory is the way writer/director Smith uses the situation with Winter as a lesson for the humans going through their own problems. In the sense of life, it becomes about finding a passion and pursuing it to the highest degree, whether it comes in a subject matter like Marine Biology or the partners in life that become family. The film will make you feel good in that rare “It’s a Wonderful Life” way, and that is neither overstating or understating what it is attempting to communicate.

As Summer fades, and another Winter beckons, the arc of change continues. Life is what happens when you’re busy making other plans, as the saying goes, and Charles Martin Smith realized these expressions of wisdom, and applied them to a dolphin movie that everyone can relate to. That’s pretty ingenious.

“Dolphin Tale 2” opens everywhere on September 12th. Featuring Nathan Gamble, Cozi Zuehlsdorff, Ashley Judd, Harry Connick Jr., Morgan Freeman, Charles Martin Smith and Kris Kristofferson. Written and directed by Charles Martin Smith. Rated “PG”



[14]

By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [15]

Senior Staff Writer

HollywoodChicago.com

pat@hollywoodchicago.com [14]

Source URL (retrieved on *Apr 20 2024 - 12:53am*):

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/24491/dolphin-tale-2-is-fantastic-family-entertainment>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hankq>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/ashley-judd>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/charles-martin-smith>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/cozi-zuehlsdorff>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/dolphin-tale-2>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/harry-connick-jr>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/hollywoodchicagocom-content>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/kris-kristofferson>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/morgan-freeman>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/review.html>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/nathan-gamble>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/patrick-mcdonald>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/warner-bros>
- [14] <mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#PAT>