

Bigger Not Better ‘Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on October 10, 2014 - 8:25am

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Rating: **1.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – This is what happens when a beloved book gets sucked into the big Hollywood studio machine and gets all the endearing qualities – plus its heart and soul – sucked right out of it. “Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day” is a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad movie. It goes from Alexander getting gum stuck in his hair and his mom buying him the wrong kind of sneakers to Steve Carell doing sake bombs in a Japanese steak house on a job interview and catching a pirate shirt he’s wearing on fire.

How did we get here? Screenwriter Rob Lieber seems to think bigger is automatically better. And this produces a movie that’s so broad it misses the specificity of the original and also seems stretched to its breaking point even at a relatively brief 81 minutes.

The original children’s book may not have been the best place to start anyway, since it doesn’t immediately lend itself to the kind of story that would support a full length film. The objectives and annoyances in it are distinctly small potatoes, but it captures the spirit of a child stuck in a funk. The first third of the film tries to stick to the source material, but from the very first moment when Alexander unconvincingly slips on a skateboard getting out of bed, “Alexander...” the movie proves unable to capture that same childish spirit on film.



Cast of ‘Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day’

Photo credit: Walt Disney Pictures

From there the film ties to the original book grow even more tenuous. After his very bad day, Alexander (Australian actor Ed Oxenbould)

makes a birthday wish for everyone else to share the misery. This unleashes a series of tired slapstick mishaps for each member of the Alexander's family. These mostly involve vomit, property damage, and a CGI kangaroo.

There's Steve Carell as unemployed but upbeat stay-at-home dad Ben, Jennifer Garner as the overworked working mom Kelly, Dylan Minnette as the older brother/teen prom king Anthony, and Kerris Dorsey as young musical theater star Emily – who's practically auditioning for a Disney version of "Glee."

Carrell's a likable movie dad, but he's mostly wasted here when forced into a series of hackneyed Disney family comedy situations where he is puked on, or forced to stand with the family as they all scream comically together at some unseen menace. Garner gets a raw deal too as yet another overworked mom who acts like a frenetic nine year old, racing around on a bike, running frantically, and yelling at children to get out of her way or suffer the consequences.



Alexander (Ed Oxenbould) Gets Into Another Fine Mess

Photo credit: Walt Disney Pictures

To their credit they both try to commit to their performances, but it's such a soulless, tone deaf production that their efforts are to no avail. When Alexander's sister Emily gets the sniffles and guzzles cough syrup before a disastrous eighth grade production of "Peter Pan", this should be the stuff of comedy gold. But the slapstick falls flatter than the sets that inevitably come down while Peter Pan flies out of control onstage.

"Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day" seems destined to please no one. It will fly over the heads of the youngest viewers – who might be the only ones actually entertained by its hapless attempts at slapstick – while boring the parents and pre-teens it's actually aimed at.

"Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day" opens everywhere on October 10th. Featuring Steve Carell, Jennifer Garner, Ed Oxenbould, Dylan Minnette, Kerris Dorsey, Megan Mullally, Donald Glover and Dick Van Dyke. Screenplay Adapted by Rob Lieber, based on a book by Judith Viorst. Directed by Miguel Arteta. Rated "PG"



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