

Back to the Funny in ‘Hot Tub Time Machine 2’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on February 20, 2015 - 6:19am

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Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – The concept is a hot tub, that also acts as a time machine. It practically writes itself! The too-meticulous plot of “Hot Tub Time Machine 2” still delivers a decent amount of laughs, although most of them fall under the crude and rude category. Better a cheap laugh than no laugh.

It is almost impossible to critique such a film, because it basically throws every possible joke against the wall, and a number of them stick. The plot has a Dada-like surrealism to it, going in such different directions that it becomes useless to try and follow at some point, and the characters have the same lack of consistency. The script – by Josh Heald – allows each of the principal characters to do whatever they want at some point, with no regard as to what persona had been assigned to them, as long as the word ‘f**k’ is put to maximum use and as long as the Freudian-like obsession with male genitalia is intact.

The gang from the first “Hot Tub Time Machine” story – Lou (Nate Corddry), Nick (Craig Robinson) and Jacob (Clark Duke) – are back, and have taken full advantage of their ability to manipulate time. For example, Lou has become a mad inventor, revolutionizing the internet with “Lounge.” Nick has rewritten every pop song before their original creators can think of it, and consistently wins Grammys.



Jacob (Clark Duke), Lou (Nate Corddry) and Nick (Craig Robinson) in ‘Hot Tub Time Machine 2’

Photo credit: *Paramount Pictures*

Jacob, Lou's son, is probably the only time traveler not benefiting from knowledge gained while bending the continuum, and despises his crass father for it. The situation goes awry when someone at a massive party at Lou's mansion shoots him in the groin, and it is discovered that the Hot Tub Time Machine from the first film could alter the circumstances so Lou doesn't get shot. This time the gang goes ten years into the future, meeting a relative named Adam (Adam Scott), and taking on the task of aligning multiple time shifts.

It's the plot that almost kills the fun, until it becomes unnecessary. It has to do with creating parallel universes ("like the TV show 'Fringe,' as the Jacob reminds us) and dealing with Lou flickering in and out, just like the fading picture in the first "Back to the Future" movie – they steal from the best. Lou is such an obnoxious character at times, a complete fadeout might have been welcomed, but that would leave one less character to deliver the bag of jokes.

And it didn't matter who made those jokes, as long as the jokes were made. This is a joke factory movie, and all levels of ribaldry are tested – obvious jokes, crude jokes, sex jokes, pop culture reference jokes, bizarre flights-of-fancy jokes – it's mind boggling how many attempts at humor are on display. It would be easy to dismiss the film, with its stupid clinging to the plot and idiotic demeanor, but the effort to make comedy is so all encompassing, that it's almost impossible not to laugh at the sheer volume of the effort.

The characters, such as they are, had a proud inconsistency to them. Most annoying was Clark Duke (TV's "The Office"). He is drawn up as a nerd – even to the point of having a redundant nerd song gleefully sung to him – and yet he aggressively shouts down all the characters at some point, and although is dressed up as the nerd, he never really is one. Not that this matters much, because all of the characters are like this...there are no jokes based on uniform assigned "roles," because everyone has to be "cool" in this film.



Nick Sings the Hits in 'Hot Tub Time Machine 2'

Photo credit: Paramount Pictures

But why quibble? It's about a Hot Tub Time Machine, for high-concept-sakes, not explorations of the soul. Because there are so many types of jokes, there is something for everyone, although grandma might not like the variation on a Mardi Gras-style flashing of the flesh. It depends on who grandma is at this point. I mean, grandma could have been one of the team of joke writers.

So get your place in the hot tub, while the theaters are still full with "shades of grey." There is no fancy analysis to be had with this sequel – it's about man-like children with a time machine, with all the possibilities and variations on dick jokes therein.

"Hot Tub Time Machine 2" opens everywhere on February 20th. Featuring Craig Robinson, Adam Scott, Nate Corddry, Clark Duke, Gillian Jacobs, Jason Jones, Kumail Nanjiani and Chevy Chase. Written by John Heald. Directed by Steve Pink. Rated "R"



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