

Funny, Spontaneous 'Storks' Really Delivers

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on September 23, 2016 - 12:11pm

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Rating: **4.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – I've waited all week to write that headline, and I will be joining the 100,000 other similar headlines out there. Hey-ooh! "Storks" is a lot of fun, without the dire need for any "message" or heavy handedness that is too familiar in the current animation environment. It's just funny.

Much of the credit has to go to writer/co-director Nicholas Stoller ("Get Him to the Greek"), doing his first animated film. He has a light touch with comedy, pressing the accelerator when he needs to, but also getting laughs from wacky dialogue and strange asides. Staying close to the roots of the story (storks no longer deliver babies, but packages), and employing a great voice cast, combined for "Storks" to join "Sausage Factory" as the funniest full-length cartoon of the year.

The old days of storks delivering babies has gone the way of the rotary phone. The new delivery model is packages, ala Amazon. Junior (voice of Andy Samberg) is an associate executive about to be promoted to manager, if he can keep impressing the big boss man Hunter (Kelsey Grammar). There is one problem – an orphan girl named Tulip (Katie Crown), who was adopted by the storks when a rogue bird (Danny Trejo) refused to deliver her as a baby.



Junior (voice of Andy Samberg) and Tulip (Katie Crown) in 'Storks'

Photo credit: Warner Bros.

Because Tulip wreaks havoc at the company, she is exiled to the mail room, where she receives a plea by letter from a young boy (Anton Starkman), who wishes for a baby brother. His parents (Ty Burrell and Jennifer Aniston) go along with the ruse, thinking it won't happen. But Tulip makes it work, and she – with Junior, who was assigned to watch out for her – must make the delivery. The premise of the delivery company then shifts to a buddy comedy.

And what an amusing comedy it is. Nicholas Stoller likes jokes, and the film pours them out like Niagara Falls. What seems frenetic on the surface is anchored brilliantly by the main road adventure, and the stupendous animation that is available to creative writers. The rule of having an initial great script proves itself yet again, and "Storks" is ten times funnier and warm than "The Secret Lives of Pets" (the most successful animated film of the year).

Getting the right vocal talent is key, and Stoller began with two experienced voices who are also big names, Andy Samberg and Kelsey Grammer. But his coup was casting Katie Crown as Tulip – her background is in vocalizing animation rather than being a "name star" (which are often added to sell the picture). She gives the character incredible verve, including a sequence in the mail room – although Tulip is the only one there, Katie Crown creates a whole office of personalities. It's head-spinningly funny.

Junior and Tulip encounter a wolf pack on the road, and it nearly steals the picture for a couple reasons. Stoller created a premise in which the pack can shape shift themselves into any vehicle or purpose, no matter how surreal ("Wolf-Pack, form into an airplane!"). And the two main wolves are voiced by (Keegan-Michael) Key and (Jordan) Peele. They were funnier in this walk-on than the whole of their 2016 film "Keanu."



Leaders of the Pack: Keegan-Michael Key and Jordan Peele in 'Storks'

Photo credit: Warner Bros.

The domestic family waiting for their bundle of joy from Junior and Tulip were a little less effective, with Ty Burrell essentially channeling his character from "Modern Family" (and was making him a realtor a nod to that show? Discuss), but they also had a good moment once they had to get together to build the "delivery system" on the roof of their house. The film as a whole had a loosey-goosey feeling, like it was improvised, which added to the laughs.

With a new animated film seemingly being released each week, it's fun to have one that just isn't all hyped and must-see-for-the-whole-family, but just a necessary escape, with a nod to funny cartoons. "Wolf-Pack, form into a last sentence that's a summation!"

"Storks" opens everywhere on September 23rd in 3D and regular screenings. See local listings for 3D theaters and show times. Featuring the voices of Andy Samberg, Katie Crown, Anton Starkman, Kelsey Grammar, Jennifer Aniston, Ty Burrell, Keegan-Michael Key, Jordan Peele and Danny Trejo. Written by Mark Monroe. Directed by Nicholas Stoller and Doug Sweetland. Rated "PG"



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