

'Monster Trucks' May Be One of the Weirdest Films Ever

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on January 18, 2017 - 7:02pm

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Rating: **2.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – A four year old walks into a room with a great idea for a movie, and unfortunately his father is president of a “motion picture group.” Millions of dollars and four years later, this child’s idea became “Monster Trucks,” one of the strangest movies ever conceived.

The father was Adam Goodman, who in 2013 put the green light on the picture (the story may be a bit exaggerated, there are other reports that Goodman merely observed his son playing with trucks, and came up with the concept himself). Filming began and was wrapped in 2014, and then the slow painful slog of the movie Paramount Studios didn’t want to release started its painful journey to the 2017 debut in January (Friday the 13th, appropriately enough). The result is a overworked and strained effort to deliver the descriptive, “trucks are powered by actual monsters.” Aimed toward the kids, but also featuring an all-star cast of real “name” performers, the film is as bad as you might think it would be...and obviously was banking on toys, sequels and other ephemeral objects associated with a movie franchise to save its hide. Instead, it becomes the latest screwy example of high concept movie overreach.

An evil oil company – is there ever any other kind? – is drilling in North Dakota, when they are attacked by tentacle-like creatures. They manage to capture a couple of them, but one escapes. Enter high schooler Tripp (Lucas Till), a gear head who is trying to restore a “monster truck,” but lives in that movieland cliché of misunderstood-hunk-who-also-may-also-be-poor, thus is the underdog.



Tripp (Lucas Till) Bonds with Creech in 'Monster Trucks'

Photo credit: Paramount Pictures

The escaped creature finds its way to the garage Tripp works at, and the hunk discovers the blob, nicknamed "Creech," and makes nice with it. Soon his tutoring partner Meredith (Jane Levy) is in on the secret – the monster can attach itself to the truck and power it, like an engine. This leads to a chase to capture the blob, trying to escape from the oil company exec (Rob Lowe) and the law (Barry Pepper), while receiving help from the "scientist" (Thomas Lennon) and the garage owner (Danny Glover).

That's right, Rob Lowe AND Barry Pepper are in this film – Lowe is sporting a Texas accent that could grind said gears. Lucas Till has since become the latest "MacGyver" on TV, and Jane Levy is now a "scream queen" ("Don't Breathe"). It seems like everyone involved has either moved on or probably forgot they made this turkey, it's just hilarious to see them all in it. I picture Barry Pepper going rogue by the third sequel and taking the blob on the road, joining the shadowy world of the underground monster truck smash circuit.

There is a bunch of special effects to bring these creatures to life – they look like a cross between an octopus and cartoon dolphin, and they are a bit schizophrenic before they settle down "to serve man." At first, they seem ominous and scary, and are portrayed as such (the main monster roars with nasty teeth at Tripp upon their meeting). But in an abrupt switch, they become benign, even introducing two other creatures as a Momma and Poppa Creech. It's indescribably weird to both see this play out, and to know that Barry Pepper is somehow involved.



High Flying Vehicles in 'Monster Trucks'

Photo credit: Paramount Pictures

But that unfortunately doesn't mean "it's so bad it's good" because – besides the dental roar – the film doesn't have any teeth. It copies its story from E.T. (although the creatures aren't from outer space) and has the requisite chase at the end. One other note that has always bugged me about man-meeting-creature films like this...why doesn't Tripp (so appropriately named for this film) go screaming into the night once he encounters the "monster." Why do they always have to be friends? The film lulled me into a dull semi-consciousness.

I have no idea how kids will adapt to this concept, if at all. That legendary four year old creator of his concept is now pushing eight...old enough to scoff at his original idea, as he turns back to his iPad to watch dancing monkey videos from Sri Lanka. Kid, just don't have a conversation with the old man about that.

"Monster Trucks" opened everywhere on January 13th. Featuring Lucas Till, Jane Levy, Rob Lowe, Barry Pepper, Amy Ryan, Frank Whaley, Thomas Lennon and Danny Glover. Screenplay by Derek Conolly. Directed by Chris Wedge. Rated "PG"



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