

'Captain Underpants' Saves Us From the Summer Snooze

Submitted by [JonHC](#) [1] on June 2, 2017 - 4:31am

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Rating: **4.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – I'm sure from the title you can glean the level of seriousness to expect, but how funny "Captain Underpants: The First Epic Movie" turns out to be is no laughing matter. The film's surprising irreverence and respect for the comic book genre makes this the animated hero we've needed, and the second best superhero film out this weekend (SEE: [Wonder Woman](#) [17]).

For obvious reasons, most animated films like this one are aimed at children, but only the truly impressive ones incorporate aspects for adults, realizing that they will be the ones who have to sit through the film with their children. The general humor in the film caters to young boys, with enough potty humor to clog a toilet with. Nicholas Stoller adapts David Pilkey's popular book series enough care to stay faithful to the series' superhero essence while creating an original story with it. Even though the humor may seem low-brow, the film's self-awareness keeps the adults from faulting it too much for that. Stoller shows he understands the source material and the comedy, which he has shown us in the past by writing films like the two most recent "Muppets" films and "Neighbors 2". Instead of focusing mostly on Captain Underpants and his origins, Stoller decides to emphasize the much more relatable buddy tale of George and Harold, which keeps this film from turning into a typical superhero origin story we've seen so many times before.



'Captain Underpants: The First Epic Movie' will have you reacting just like this.

Photo credit: Dreamworks Pictures

Stoller brings many elements from the first novel's story into the film, which is enough to appease fans old and new. Some of the changes he incorporates into the film will cater more to the fans who have followed the series since the beginning. These fans are now in their mid- to late-20's (like me) and the film offers a surprisingly well-thought and incorporated social and political message that is meant to appeal to them.

Since the beginning, there is a message of rebelling against tyranny throughout. The message? "Make school fun again!" There is even a push to save the art program which was shut down by a man with a hairpiece, a big body and little hands who has the temper of a toddler. Including these not-so-subtle references to Trump and our current predicament adds a layer that might go over the heads of the younger, intended audience, but will fill our inner child with glee.

The bright writing is complimented by the vibrant color palette of the animation. The animation style may be on the simple side, but it perfectly channels the illustrations of the novel while refining and sharpening the definition. Director David Soren is no stranger to flashy animation, but unlike his previous film "Turbo," he tempered the crisp design with real substance. "Captain Underpants" is unrelenting when it comes to keeping up a strong, yet steady pace, never creating a lull. Soren knows his audience and their attention spans and makes sure that every scene is either filled with jokes, hijinks or action. Some of the greatest scenes are done in different animation styles, with my favorite involving sock puppets. Soren makes sure to also include elements from the book aside from the drawing style, and the best example is a "fight" sequence that is told exactly the way it would be found inside of the novel, right down to the flipping pages back and forth to simulate motion.



Is that a Professor Poopypants or are you just happy to see me in 'Captain Underpants: The First Epic Movie'

Photo credit: Dreamworks Pictures

Rest assured, no children were harmed in the making of this film, especially since every character, young and old, is voice by an adult. This is especially impressive when it comes to the voice of George and Harold, played by Kevin Hart and Thomas Middleditch respectively. Hart and Middleditch have very expressive and unique voices which make them perfect for their characters. They are the lifeblood of this film and the last line of defense when it comes to keeping the high-energy appeal of the film consistent throughout. Their chemistry and believable buddy dynamic sell the more emotional parts of the film. The real hero is Ed Helms, whose range allows him to essentially play two distinctly different characters, Mr. Krupp and Captain Underpants, who are actually the same person, but you'd never know by just hearing it. The film also features great voice work from animation veterans like Nick Kroll, Jordan Peele and Kristen Schaal.

In the land of tights, capes, and outside underwear, only one hero reigns supreme and that's "Captain Underpants: The First Epic Movie." The film not only pays homage to typical elements of the genre but at the same time emphasizes the absurdity in a fun way. The film offers more than enough laugh for kids and adults alike, but also contains an intellectual depth that shows just how timely and much-needed this animated film really is.

"Captain Underpants: The First Epic Movie" opens everywhere on June 2nd. Featuring Kevin Hart, Thomas Middleditch, Nick Kroll, Ed Helms, Jordan Peele and Kristen Schaal. Screenplay by Nicholas Stoller. Directed by David Soren. Rated "PG"



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