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Rating: 4.0/5.0

CHICAGO – If a good laugh is golden, then "Teen Titans Go! To the Movies" is worth its weight. Although the meta-make-fun of superhero movies have already been done almost to death (Deadpool?), the Titans have been doing it on the Cartoon Network since 2013, and take it to a new level in their movie adventure.

And the brilliance of the adventure lies in simply making fun of all the costumed characters that moviegoers now see every couple of months. The Titans want to get into the movie world, especially their leader Robin the Boy Wonder, and they generally wreak havoc upon the makers of these particularly strange films, The story, like the cartoon, is frenetically paced, and features all the main cast in their voice roles, along with Nicolas Cage, Jimmy Kimmel, James Corden, Patton Oswalt, Will Arnett and Kristen Bell taking on characters in this DC comics universe. If you can't have a good time at this film – especially if you love comics and comic book movies – then I would readjust your joy meter.

The film begins with the Teen Titans... Robin (voice by Scott Menville), Starfire (Hynden Walch), Cyborg (Khary Payton), Raven (Tara Strong) and Beast Boy (Greg Cripes)... fighting Balloon Man (James Corden), who don't know who they are. While doing a "sick beat" rap song introducing themselves, the Justice League intervenes – including Superman (Nicolas Cage) and Batman (Jimmy Kimmel) – and berates the crew for not being serious enough to get their own movie.

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The Team is Ready for Their Close Up in 'Teen Titans Go! To the Movies' *Photo credit: Warner Bros.*

This starts them on their journey to Hollywood and Warner Bros., where they encounter Jade Wilson (Kristen Bell), the director of many of the superhero epics. Trying to stall their efforts is Slade (Will Arnett), who the Titans hope will become their nemesis in the pitch to get their movie. In stealing a rare gem, Slade unwittingly becomes part of the launch of a newly invented movie streaming service called DOOMSDAY (badly named), and the Robin movie will be the first film to infiltrate every device. Action!

The plot is convoluted, and serves only to delivers a buffet of jokes, sight gags and insider references that come at the viewer faster and more furious than Vin Diesel. The more that is known about comic books (DC Universe) and their film versions, the funnier the animated story is, but it also works as a noted skewering of the ridiculousness of superhero films in general, which is one genre of film that cannot be made fun of enough.

The fake movies that are being made include every aspect of the Batman character... "Utility Belt," "Batmobile" and even "Alfred" before thinking of Robin, which exasperates the Boy Wonder even more. The film even manages to mock the early trailers, "coming in three summers from now, 'Utility Belt'!" The race to have even more obscure super characters become movies is also ridiculed, with Slade being mistaken for Deadpool and the "Challengers of the the Unknown" – an obscure DC team – getting some screen time... albeit floating in the abyss.



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Famous Director Jade Wilson (voice of Kristen Bell) Explains All in 'Teen Titans Go! To the Movies' *Photo credit: Warner Bros.*

The film also goes deeper than the TV show in different animation styles, and the use of music. Particularly funny is the "Upbeat Inspirational Song About Life," which features a 1970s style Animal Band (like the Banana Splits) delivering good tidings to the team, until the lead singer meets an untimely end. The animation shifts during the song, as it does throughout the film, even referencing the Titans in their previous animated incarnation as a more serious superhero team.

Man, you can't laugh enough these days, and the Titans generate more than most comedies. And guess what? One of the running gags is that Robin has tiny hands. That sounds like another semi-famous-currently-historic celebrity. Titans just put a sick beat on political satire, yo.

"Teen Titans Go! To the Movies" opened everywhere on July 27th. Featuring the voices of Nicolas Cage, Jimmy Kimmel, Patton Oswalt, Will Arnett, Kristen Bell, James Corden, Scott Menville, Hynden Walch, Khary Payton, Tara Strong and Greg Cripes. Written by "Teen Titans Go!" series creators Aaron Horvath and Michael Jelenic. Directed by Peter Rida Michail and Aaron Horvath. Rated "PG-13"



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