

Visual Beauty Can't Cover Up Cultural Vagueness in 'Abominable'

Submitted by [JonHC](#) [1] on September 29, 2019 - 3:04pm

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Rating: **2.5/2.5**

CHICAGO – The changing view on yetis goes to show just how different my childhood was from kids growing up today. Back in my day, yeti's were elusive creatures meant to be feared, much like Big Foot or Loch Ness. Films like “Smallfoot” and “Abominable” are paving the way towards acceptance were we ever to encounter a yeti, but the latter is more of a step back than forwards.

It is impossible to completely dislike something that is so morally good and good-hearted. “Abominable” should be stomping into our hearts, but it feels more like it tip-toes past us. The story follows young Yi (Chloe Bennet) as she deals with the grief over the loss of her father by working constantly so that she can save enough money to take the trip they had been planning to take together. Her self-imposed isolation brings her in contact with an escaped yeti who needs help avoiding the organization that kidnapped it and getting back to its mountainous home on Everest. Along with her friends Peng (Albert Tsai) and Jin (Tenzing Norgay Trainor), they travel across China while trying to avoid capture from the eccentric Burnish (Eddie Izzard) and Dr. Zara (Sarah Paulson).



Photo credit: Dreamworks

There are many life lessons to be had, some sobering realizations, and a cathartic moment or two. Pretty standard fare for a kid's film about a

magical yeti. In fact, everything about the story feels forgettably basic. Jill Culton knows a thing or two about bringing furry creatures to life, but unlike her previous film “Monsters, Inc”, the only fuzzy beast with any personality in “Abominable” is an old man voiced the legendary Eddie Izzard. We are taken on this journey, but there is little memorable about any of the characters because they are never truly given anything to make them uniquely stand out from any other animated film. Everything about the story feels bland and overdone. When your most memorable character is a snake that periodically pops up and says, “Whoop,” it might be time to reevaluate.

There is a poignant element when they touch on the topic of handling grief, but it is always focused on so briefly that it almost feels like the film doesn't want to dwell on it too long for fear that the audience might get too sad. Everything about this movie screens feel-good, but that generic attitude is its biggest detriment. The story takes place in China, and for once the voice cast is actually made up predominantly of Asian actors. The real shame is that there is hardly any focus on putting the unique Chinese culture on display aside from some showing some food dishes. When the film takes us on a tour of China, it seems to be more concerned with showing the geographical and not so much the cultural. The kids themselves would be indistinguishable from kids in America if we weren't told ahead of time that this took place in an Asian country. “Abominable” could have greatly benefitted from having the screenplay developed by someone that is actually part of Chinese culture. Novel idea, I know.



Photo credit: Dreamworks

Co-directors Culton and Todd Wilderman do compensate for the cultural vagueness by providing some visual opulence. The landmarks visited are animated with flair, highlighting their beauty and minorly touching on their overall significance. The film's magical element guides the more gorgeous moments and those are the ones you'll end up remembering (aside from the snake). To help accentuate the visuals, there is splendid scoring that relies on a violin, some classical music, and Coldplay's ever-applicable “Fix You”. Ironically, “fix you” is what the filmmakers involved should have been focused on when it came to “Abominable”.

“Abominable” opens everywhere on September 27th. Featuring Chloe Bennet, Albert Tsai, Tenzing Norgay Trainor, Eddie Izzard, Sarah Paulson, Tsai Chin, Michelle Wong, and James Hong. Directed by Jill Culton and Todd Wilderman. Written by Jill Culton. Rated “PG”



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