

‘Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs’ Tastes Right For All Generations

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 18, 2009 - 11:30am

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Rating: **4.0/5.0**

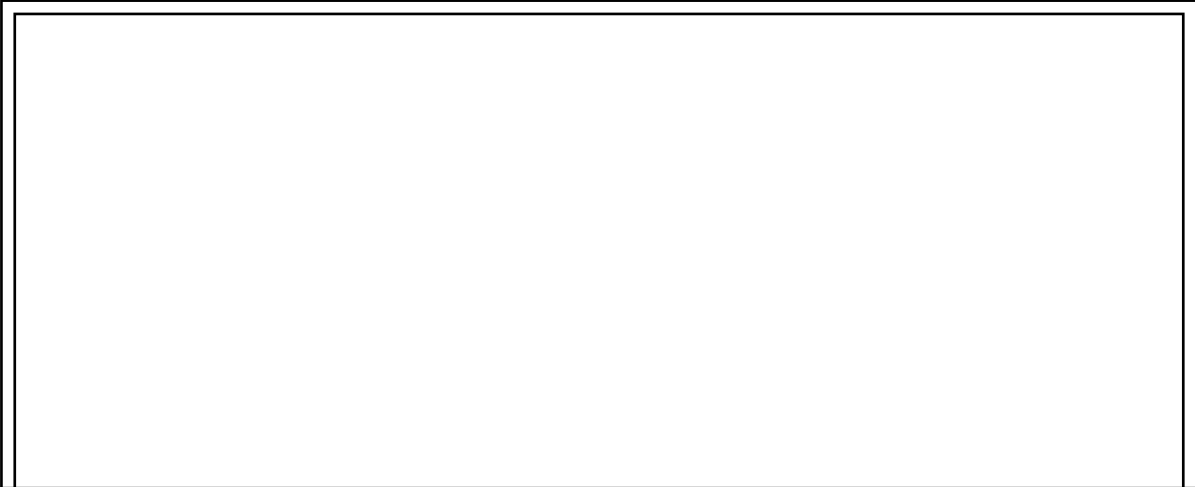
CHICAGO – Proving that you should never judge an animated film by its cover or its typically predictable brethren, “Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs” is a very funny comedy with one of the best voice casts in years, an enjoyable visual aesthetic, and even a heartwarming message that doesn’t come off over-cooked.

As someone who sees nearly every animated film released in the ’00s, I can tell you that most of them are disposable, interchangeable, and predictable. For every “Up” or “Coraline,” there are a half-dozen “Barnyard” or “Open Season”s. So, it brings me great, surprising pleasure to say that “Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs” defies all expectations and I doubt any animated film will be as purely entertaining this season. Young kids, older brothers, babysitters, parents, and even grandparents will find something to like here.



Sam Sparks voiced by Anna Faris and Flint Lockwood voiced by Bill Hader in Columbia Pictures’ animated film Cloudy With A Chance Of Meatballs.
Photo credit: Courtesy of Song Pictures

Only based on the set-up for Judi & Ron Barret’s beloved children’s book (but fully capturing the spirit of a book designed around food weather), the story opens on the island of Swallow Falls, a dull, gloomy setting known mostly for being hidden under the ‘A’ in Atlantic Ocean on most maps and for its killer sardine industry.





Sam Sparks voiced by Anna Faris with Flint Lockwood voiced by Bill Hader in Columbia Pictures' animated film Cloudy With A Chance Of Meatballs.
Photo credit: Courtesy of Sony Pictures

Inventor Flint Lockwood (Bill Hader) refuses to give in to his depressing surroundings and works to come up with one great, world-changing invention. Previous attempts include the ill-conceived rat-bird hybrid and a device that translates monkey's thoughts. It turns out that most monkeys think of only their name and what they want to eat. (In a typically surreal move, the end credits reveal that Neil Patrick Harris voices the monkey Steve even though he has nearly no dialogue.)

Flint's latest device is one that turns water into food. All he wants is a cheeseburger but an incident with power lines, sends his machine into the stratosphere, where there's more than enough moisture for Big Macs, spaghetti, giant pancakes, and much more. It turns out that Flint still has access to the great computer in the sky. Want steak tomorrow? Talk to Flint and it will fall from the sky.

Of course, with great power comes great responsibility and Flint pushes his world-changing invention too much, resulting in some truly twisted weather fronts. The story of Flint and his magical machine thrusts young weathergirl Sam Sparks (Anna Faris) into the spotlight and shakes the life of all the island residents including the weight-gaining mayor (Bruce Campbell), tough cop (Mr. T.), former sardine ad star (Andy Samberg), and even Flint's tough father (James Caan).



Sam Sparks voiced by Anna Faris with Flint Lockwood voiced by Bill Hader in Columbia Pictures' animated film Cloudy With A Chance Of Meatballs.
Photo credit: Courtesy of Sony Pictures

Clearly, the voice cast of “Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs” is made up of talented, clever choices. Hader & Faris are fantastic, making their characters easy to root for and the rest of the ensemble, especially Caan, are pitch-perfect.

“Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs” is continuously clever both visually and with some razor-sharp dialogue. Courtesy of writer/directors Phil Lord and Chris Miller, “Cloudy” accomplishes the feat of giving children something to care about and visuals to ooh and aah at and giving adults laughs that will certainly go over the heads of the little ones sometimes in the same moment (for example, a video of a kitten singing “Fight the Power” had me laughing as hard as anything in a long time for a different reason than the toddler in the row behind me).

Even the messages of the film - stay true to yourself and your dreams and sometimes it's okay to be the smartest person in town - aren't over-played like they are in so many family films. The film feels a bit longer than its 90 minutes and the 3D is borderline unnecessary, feeling more like an afterthought and washing out the vibrant colors of the second half of the film, but those are the only minor flaws of one of the most surprisingly tasty treats that the animation genre has produced so far this year.

‘Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs’ features voice work by Bill Hader, Anna Faris, James Caan, Mr. T, Bruce Campbell, Andy Samberg, and Neil Patrick Harris. It was written and directed by Phil Lord & Chris Miller. It opened on September 18th, 2009. It is rated PG.



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