

'Smurfs: The Lost Village' Should Have Remained Undiscovered

Submitted by [JonHC](#) [1] on April 11, 2017 - 11:34am

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Rating: **1.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – There are only a few times that I have left a film mentally shouting, “Won’t someone think of the children?” Not through some self-righteous religious fit, of course, but through a general concern for the animated films created for our young. “Smurfs: The Lost Village” is either made for a specific crowd in mind or made for a crowd without a mind.

Created the perfect children’s film isn’t an easy task. You need something that will be engaging, exciting, and has something to offer the countless adults that will be forced to sit through with their children. “Smurfs: The Lost Village” offers you none of that and instead tries to peddle nostalgia to a new generation that has no context for it. Director Kelly Asbury, who directed the best Shrek film (“Shrek 2”), has proven he knows what it takes to create a compelling animated film. The best choice made for the film as a whole was returning to a completely animated format instead of trying to continue the live action monstrosity from the previous two films. The color palette is vibrant and attention grabbing, which is important since the film offers little else for you to hold on to.



It's a sausage fest no longer when Smurfette discovers other female Smurfs in 'Smurfs: The Lost Village'

Photo credit: Sony Pictures

Gargamel is at it again, trying to capture the Smurfs and, of course, (SPOILER) failing miserably. It doesn’t take a savant to predict that ending, but the story doesn’t even attempt to throw any curveballs to make you think the Smurfs are in any real danger. Writers Stacey Harman and Pamela Ribon follow the formulaic set-up of the original show too closely. The safe space the film creates is innocuous but also bereft of any sense of risk. The villain spot is taken from Gargamel and given to the real conflict of the story: self-doubt. That’s a crippling for as any, but not one that plays well in a children’s film. The journey of identity the film promotes will go unheard since the film’s target

audience seems to be toddlers still in their formative years. That message would have worked better in a "Shrek" type film that has an older appeal, but everything in this "Smurfs" film feels like it was safely made for the kindergarten crowd.

What does shine in the film is Ribon's experience creating empowering females like she has in "Moana" and "Samantha Who?" in the past. As the Smurfs discover a tribe of all female, Amazonian-esque Smurfs, there is a culture clash that showcases the power of females and what they can achieve in a patriarchy-free society. This was a refreshing sight in an otherwise lackluster film, and even then my excitement was short-lived. This exciting development and small social commentary proved to just be a vehicle in the end for more musical numbers, but with more female vocals. That is why every actress who has voiced Smurfette in the last decade has been a singer, with Demi Lovato carrying the torch this time.



Brainy Smurf barely makes it out alive. Will you survive 'Smurfs: The Lost Village'?

Photo credit: Sony Pictures

With the empowering moments turning out to just be musical fodder, the message of self-identity was the only other thing adults had to latch onto. Smurfette, a creation of Gargamel's, struggles to find her place among the village of all male Smurfs, but then discovers the society of all female Smurfs and ends up feeling the same. The cause? She doesn't have an overwhelming personality trait that completely takes over her life to the point that it becomes part of her name. The result? She discovers she's the only well-rounded Smurf that can be anything she wants. A Renaissance Smurf if you will. Apparently, she was given some form of free will from her creator Gargamel that every other natural born Smurf lacks. I may be reading too much into the mythos they tried to establish, but I'm certain there's some sort of pseudo-religious aspect left to uncover. Don't worry, you won't get the chance to even examine it long enough before the next music sequence is forced on you.

The one thing you can't about the film is that it was cast poorly. Consisting of mostly TV actors, every actor in this film is matched perfectly to their character, especially since most of the pairings are painfully obvious. For musical talent, we have Demi Lovato as the lead in the role of Smurfette, Meghan Trainor as SmurfMelody, and everyone else as themselves only autotuned. We also have the voice talents of Julia Roberts (SmurfWillow), Mandy Patinkin (Papa Smurf), Rainn Wilson (Gargamel), Michelle Rodriguez (SmurfStorm), and Jack McBrayer inevitably cast as Clumsy Smurf. Everyone plays their part competently, which is to be expected because every actor choice was the safest possible one.

The Smurfs have never been one to take risks, preferring the safety and complacency that their village provides. In this metaphorical village is also where you will find this remake/rebranding film. "Smurfs: The Lost Village" takes the franchise back to its roots in hopes of rivaling the success of "Trolls." What "Trolls" lacked in innovation, it made up for with adventure and high-energy. Unfortunately, "Smurfs: The Lost Village" offers no compensation for its cinematic failings, let alone for your time and money.

"Smurfs: The Lost Village" opened everywhere on April 7th. Featuring Demi Lovato, Julia Roberts, Mandy Patinkin, Michelle Rodriguez, Rainn Wilson, Meghan Trainor, Jack McBrayer and Joe Manganiello. Screenplay by Stacey Harman and Pamela Ribon. Directed by Kelly Asbury. Rated "PG"



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