

Andy Samberg, Witty Script Lift Animated 'Space Chimps' Off Launching Pad

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Rating: **4.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – So far in the 2008 summer animation season we've seen cuddly martial artists ("[Kung Fu Panda](#) [17]") and robots in love ("[WALL-E](#) [18]").

But where are the monkeys and how long before the first joke about flinging their poo? Both desires are satisfied in the playfully visual and wryly funny "Space Chimps," which is anchored by the vocal talents of Andy Samberg ("Saturday Night Live").



Ham III (Andy Samberg) – the slacker grandson of the first chimp blasted into space before manned spaceflight – takes off into out-of-this-world adventure and comedy in "Space Chimps".

Image credit: Vanguard Animation





Andy Samberg voices Ham III in "Space Chimps".
Photo credit: 20th Century Fox

Samberg is the voice of Ham III: the chimp grandson of the first NASA monkey in space. He has been reduced to being an attraction in a cheap circus under the guidance of his grandfather's old buddy Houston (Carlos Alazragui).

Meanwhile at Cape Canaveral, the reputation of the space program rests on the discovery of a wormhole in space that has sent a probe to a distant and life-sustaining planet.

On that planet, it turns out the probe has been captured by a rubbery, blue life force named Zartog (Jeff Daniels). Zartog's intent is to use the multi-tasking machine to enslave his fellow inhabitants.

It's up to the space program on Earth to send another rocket through the wormhole to retrieve the probe. The only problem is that humans might not survive the wormhole experience.



Cheryl Hines voices Luna in "Space Chimps".
Image credit: 20th Century Fox

Enter chimp astronauts Luna (Cheryl Hines) and Titan (Patrick Warburton). They're joined by a reluctant Ham III who has been recruited by the astronaut program for marketing purposes. It's up to this unlikely simian team to save the day on the distant planet and keep the space race on Earth alive.

The beauty of this rather conventional, kiddy adventure is that it revels in not taking anything seriously. The script is peppered with stupid physical comedy, silly puns and dry witticisms on the concepts of space and monkeys. This mood is fun for both children and adults and it grandly accomplishes its entertainment mission.

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While the computer animation is clean and graphic, the faces are still a bit creepy in extreme close-up.

The design of the distant world seems to pay homage to Dr. Seuss with the inhabitants looking similar to the residents of Whoville. One character in particular – Kilowatt (a great Kristin Chenoweth) – is cute comic relief. She practices heroics by singing operatic notes and traveling through the digestive system of a flesh-eating monster.

The silliness is contagious in this film with tributes to past space movies like "2001: A Space Odyssey" and "The Right Stuff" adding to the farce. The geeky mission scientists are particularly droll. They provide a jokey repartee to the evolving process of monkeys in space.

It's impossible not to like a "cartoon" with an adventure on the Cloud of Id. It's Ham III himself who defines the spirit behind this terrific family comedy when he remarks: "Life is a circus. Only the tents get bigger."

"Space Chimps," which stars Andy Samberg, Jeff Daniels, Cheryl Hines, Patrick Warburton, Kristin Chenoweth, Carlos Alazragui and Stanley Tucci, opened on July 18, 2008.



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