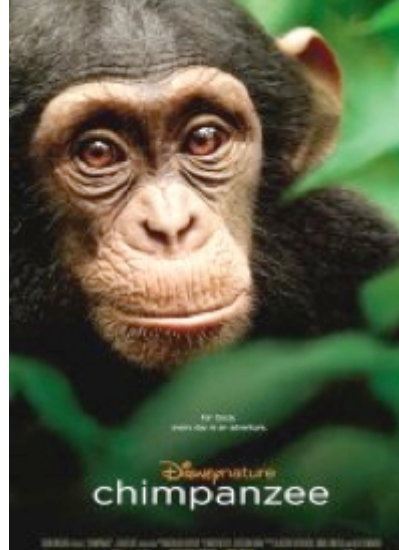




Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on April 20, 2012

Disney's "Chimpanzee": an Irresistible Family-friendly Film

If you think being a human is rough, try being a member of one of the two extant species of ape in the genus *Pan*. Disney's new film *Chimpanzee* does a marvelous job of giving humans a glimpse into the world of these fascinating creatures — capturing their trials and tribulations, and despite the non-human central characters, managing to convey a message of the value of sacrifice and the importance of family.



Disney has turned much of its attention to producing nature films in the last few years, particularly around Earth Day, making a rather successful industry of it. And while these movies have all been well made, *Chimpanzee's* extraordinary storytelling quality may just make it the best yet.

Set in the African jungles and narrated by Tim Allen, the story follows baby Oscar, who affectionately and closely shadows his mother, learning valuable lessons about jungle survival. Though as the youngest of the troop, he is looked down upon by the other chimps, he's an absolute favorite of his mother's. It is from her that Oscar learns how to crack open nuts with a rock and how to hunt for fruit. It is during some of these scenes that laughs are drawn from the audience at Oscar's several awkward attempts and failures before finally grasping some of the concepts.

Unfortunately, in order to find fruit, Oscar and his family must travel into the territory of rival chimpanzees — who are much like a Los Angeles gang, fiercely initiating attacks and pursuing the weakest of the newcomers.

The tensions between the two communities increase dramatically as Oscar's troop penetrates further and further into rival territory in search of the fruit. The rival chimps chase them away, later searching them out and attacking them again. Oscar's mother is killed during the assault, though that scene is edited so that it is entirely off-screen and only implied. Oscar — bereft, defenseless, and independent all too soon — still has a lot to learn. He instinctively approaches several of the other females, seeking a mother figure; however, they reject him, focusing on their own offspring.

But just when all seems lost for the lowest on the totem pole, Oscar experiences his saving grace by drawing the attention of the least likely chimp in the troop: the highest-ranked one.

Audiences will be engaged in this entertaining film from start to finish. Overall, they'll find the chimps wonderfully fascinating because of their expressiveness and human-like qualities. And it doesn't hurt that Oscar possesses all these qualities in abundance, and is the most adorable chimp possible for a leading character. So what with Disney's carefully crafted time-lapse photography that regales moviegoers with scenes of spiders weaving their webs and flowers blooming, the lush scenery, and



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Oscar's charm, it's an aesthetic masterpiece.

Because the film's focus is on an animal species, parents can rest assured that there is no objectionable content such as drug or alcohol abuse and sexual content. Though in some scenes the animals do become a bit violent with one another, possibly frightening some of the younger children, overall *Chimpanzee* is family friendly.

Though the film focuses on chimpanzees, Disney fortunately resisted the opportunity to tout any sort of evolutionary theory — instead highlighting the beautiful and also often cruel facets of nature, as well as the necessity for self-sustenance and self-advocacy.

One could even make the leap, albeit a rather dramatic one, that the film highlights how members of a community are perfectly capable of supporting one another. There is no supreme chimpanzee government in the story that swoops in and redistributes chimp "wealth" to help the weakest of the troop. And yet Oscar still miraculously manages to survive. Go figure!

Chimpanzee is a wonderful mix of documentary and feature film, as it effectively teaches audiences about the habits of chimps while simultaneously telling Oscar's story. Likewise, the narration in the film is straightforward and simple enough to be understood by the younger audiences. And for those younger audiences, much of their entertainment will come straight from the chimps and their natural behaviors.

Perhaps what is so amazing about the movie is the fact that it is a true story that happened to be captured on film by some masterful videographers, and pieced together into a beautiful and compelling presentation.



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