The Smurfs Leaves Audiences Blue

In this production, the evil wizard Gargamel drives the Smurfs out of their village, causing them to accidently exit their own magical world and enter into ours by way of a vortex. Gargamel is consumed by his desire to extract all of the CGI smurfy essence in order to become the most powerful wizard in the world. Clumsy Smurf leads Gargamel and his cat Azrael into a village, where they encounter a vortex. The vortex propels Papa Smurf (Jonathan Winters), Clumsy (Anton Yelchin), Grouchy (George Lopez), Brainy (Fred Armisen), Gutsy (Alan Cumming), and Smurfette (Katy Perry) into Central Park, and then into the apartment of marketing businessman Patrick (Neil Patrick Harris) and his wife Grace (Jayma Mays).

Patrick is already facing a crucial period in his life. His career is on the fast-track, and he and his wife are preparing to be parents. In fact, it is this element of the film that proves to have some depth, as some of the film's focus is on Patrick's preparation for fatherhood. Patrick turns to Papa Smurf as his role model.

That is perhaps one of the few redeeming elements in the film, as it lacks in humor and entertainment value.

Sadly, the adults in the film prove to be the more hilarious of the characters, since the Smurfs often come off as obnoxious, though in some cases, that can be attributed to the voiceovers, most notably, George Lopez. Overall, however, it just seems as if the voice personalities were poorly selected and do not seem to fit the characters' images.

Some of the more delightful moments in the film focus on a supporting character, Odile, a successful cosmetics executive who seeks to discover a youth-enhancing potion. Played by Sofia Vergara, moviegoers will likely find themselves wishing that she appeared on-screen more often.

The comedy in the film is virtually absent as much of it rests on the trite use of toilet humor. At one point, the Smurfs find themselves in Patrick's bathroom, and the potty humor takes center stage. When Grouchy Smurf finds himself in a tub full of M&Ms, he mistakes them for Smurf droppings, and then eats them.

The film does manage to entail some rare comedic moments, particularly those that focus on the abuse of Gargamel's cat, Azrael, but unfortunately most of those moments require parental explanations for why those things are not acceptable in real life (e.g. throwing a cat at the wall).

There is some adult "humor" in the film as well. The "new" Smurf, Gutsy, is a kilt-wearing one who seems to take pleasure in exposing his backside. Also, since Smurfette's voice is that of Katy Perry,

Smufette's confession to having "kissed a Smurf and liked it" is undoubtedly intended as a reference to Perry's song about a girl enjoying the kiss of another girl.

And there is a risqué moment in the film where Gargamel questions how there is just one "Papa" Smurf and 99 sons.

In the beginning, it was somewhat funny to hear the word "smurf" used as a number of different parts of speech, but after several scenes of the same thing, it becomes a tired attempt at humor. Likewise, it becomes evident that the word "Smurf" is used as a curse. For example, when Neil Patrick Harris exclaims "Smufity, smurf, smurf, smurf!" Gutsy reprimands, "There's no call for that kind of language, laddie."

For some viewers, the magical element in *The Smurfs* may be troublesome, and there is quite a lot of it. Overall, magic is a daily aspect of the Smurfs' lives. For instance, Papa Smurf conjures up a vision of the future, though it later proves to be not all that reliable. Later, the Smurfs chant incantations and cast spells. In fact, the driving force behind the film's plot is Gargamel's quest to capture the Smurfs' magical essence.

Equally bothersome is that when Gargamel grows infuriated or flustered, he calls upon "the gods." However, Neil Patrick Harris does make a reference to God and the creation of the Universe in the film.

One positive attribute of the film is that its technology is impressive at times, and some of the scenes are aesthetically pleasing, particularly the opening scene when the Smurfs are shown in their home in Middle Europe, a colorful and cheerful scene.

In the end, however, *The Smurfs* is best left for the DVD rental, if that.

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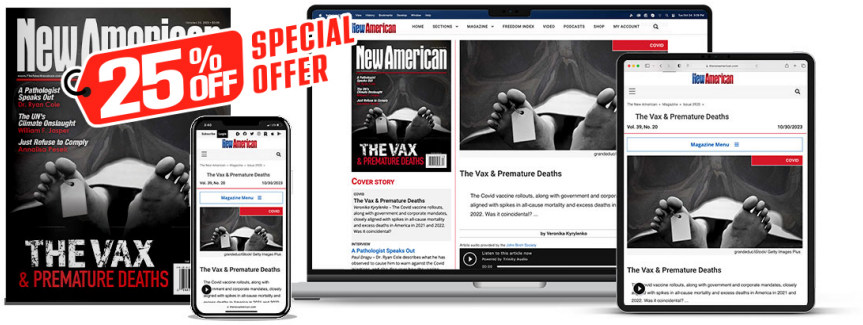

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