

# "Rocky" a real horror to witness unfold

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and the story isn't exactly typical fare for the animation set.

Actually, it's a hybrid of previous science-fiction movies — there's "Star Wars," and "Independence Day"; anybody who knows "Star Trek" movies will know exactly which one "Titan A.E." has stolen from. Earth has been destroyed by a rather unlikable gang called the Drudge, who are pure forces of energy and apparently incapable of defeat. (So it seems odd that, as several human escapees assert, the aliens felt threatened by "the human imagination".)

A few avoid execution and scatter, and Cale (voiced well by Matt Damon), son of the head man on the secret "Titan" project (that "human imagination" the Drudge were so fearful of), ends up cutting space metal on a factory outpost about 15 years later. It's not long before he is recruited by a space pilot (voice of Bill Pullman) and a new friend Akima (Drew Barrymore) to retrieve the Titan project, which was hidden somewhere in the cosmos by dear old dad.

What ensues is forcefully plot-driven, which rarely slows down even to show a few of the spectacular worlds the film inhabits. The voices of Damon and Barrymore, along with the caricatures, have good chemistry, which makes some of the less-than-perfect human animation a little more manageable.

"Titan A.E." works best when it introduces computer animation on top-drawn sets; particularly well done is the setting for the movie's final 30 minutes, an asteroid belt made of ice. Computer animation, because of digital cameras, is the wave of future, and the images in this movie will be spruced up with time, possibly as soon as the next "Star Wars" opus.

There's hiccups in the production; one character reverses loyalties out of nowhere, a questionable script risk at best, and I'm inclined to say the movie worked better without it.

Some toadlike character on the ship (voiced by John Leguizamo) gets annoying, while Tone Loc never should be allowed to voice a character again. There aren't many laughs in "Titan A.E.," and the ones that are tried don't work. There shouldn't have



**RENE RUSSO as Natasha and Jason Alexander as Boris star in the cinematic debut of the animated series "Rocky and Bullwinkle." The film also stars Robert DeNiro as The Fearless Leader**

been any. Why is it always assumed children can only be won over by constant laughter, or by laughter at all? Or at animation must equal a cache of useless, cloying songs? (To be fair, "Titan A.E." has a soundtrack of its own, and an annoying one at that, with its whiny rock and cheap guitar licks. By 3100 AD, you'd think we'd have evolved past it.)

On the contrary, their imaginations are still broad enough to accept all sorts of scenarios, not just slapstick. "Titan A.E." is a PG movie, and it has some violence and a scene where nudity is handled in a perfectly normal, acceptable fashion. Kids will like the movie, and the experience won't necessarily lie to them about reality, like nearly every Disney movie wants to.

For that, Bluth didn't make a perfect movie but an important one, a movie that could plow a course for better ones of its kind to follow. ★★½

"The Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle" is an alien life form of a movie, something so odd and disconcerting that it'd be almost unfair to call it worthless, though it is, along with being not funny nor interesting. Nor does it have a genuine point we could want to believe, even possibly.

This movie combines live

action with animation, a satire on television, cameo guest stars, none of whom show very well, and a performance that made me think that Judy Garland was haunting the stage. I believe the moral very well may have been finding your inner child. We needed Rocky J. Squirrel and Bullwinkle J. Moose to do that, I suppose.

It's so completely out of mode, I had no reference to it, accept maybe a movie entitled "Delicatessen," a French film about futuristic family of butchering cannibals and underground trolls. This is what I'm left with, flying animation that talks and man-eaters.

Anybody who's seen the trailers knows the movie isn't funny, but it goes beyond that. Directed by Des McAnuff, the movie seems to be self-aware of its lack of humor. At certain moments, Bullwinkle, who, along with sidekick Rocky, has been pulled into the real world to save humanity from the newly-human Fearless Leader (Robert DeNiro, shame on him) who plans to hypnotize the universe with really bad television, seems to play up to that fact.

Then the movie panders to the audience, making fun of our hero, ridiculing him time and time again. I mean, it goes beyond the idea of hapless protagonist.

This movie is so self-aware, along with everything else around, and then self-aware of that it ceases to exist in a way, as if "The Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle" was made simply to be its own inside gag. I'm serious when I say there are entire scenes constructed that are so unfunny and needless that I half suspected I was missing the joke, though nobody laughed around me, so I wasn't. Or maybe we all were.

Consider there's a narrator, who doubles as the voice of the moose, that occasionally talks to us, then to the characters, then to himself (when he thinks we aren't listening?). Occasionally, characters talk back to him, or repeat what he says, in a way that makes us believe they are operating on a parallel structure, not necessarily aware that the narrator has just said what they will say. And we haven't even gotten into the characters talking to the screen themselves.

I see it as undisciplined filmmaking on the highest order, as if this material looked fantastic in idea and died once it hit the celluloid. Boris (Jason Alexander) and Natasha (Rene Russo) are insufferable. So is DeNiro's character. And none of them compares to the human lead of the movie, Piper Perabo, who plays FBI agent Karen Sympathy, entrusted with

helping Moose and Squirrel save the day.

There is no way of gauging her performance. It's acting all right, overacting, comedically so, and purposefully done. It's a feat, really, as she screws up her face, her voice takes on odd inflections, no sentence of dialogue is spoken with any sense of restraint — what was she going for here?

I stop short of calling her performance bad — Whoopi Goldberg's cameo in this movie is bad — because I have no idea what the effect is supposed to be. I'd be hard challenged to name five other 23-year-old actresses who could have done the same thing with what seems to be gusto. Perabo is the train wreck at the middle of this movie, which is maybe more watchable because of it.

Of course under no circumstances would this girl be an FBI agent (she looks no older than her actual age), but maybe that was the point. Maybe it wasn't. In one scene, the FBI is portrayed as a spoof that you see in office comedies, as row after row after row of desks. This is not funny, because nobody perceives the FBI that way. It works in office comedies, but I have never encountered a

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