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DR. SEUSS' HORTON HEARS A WHO!

If you can separate your memories of Dr. Seuss' books from the experience of the computer-animated *Dr. Seuss' Horton Hears a Who!*, you can have a reasonably good time at the film. You'll likely have a reasonably good time

anyway

, but for maximum enjoyment, it's best to ignore any prior knowledge of the kindly elephant and his microscopic speck-dwellers and simply accept this antic entertainment for the disposable blockbuster it is.

Horton

looks like a Dr. Seuss adaptation; it just doesn't much

sound

like one.

Certainly, the movie - directed by Jimmy Hayward and Steve Martino - is visually thrilling. With Seuss's deliriously topsy-turvy designs gorgeously, eye-poppingly rendered, every new scene features ingenious details, be it an assembly-line breakfast table that allows the Mayor of Whoville to visit with each of his 96 daughters individually, or a glass encasement that drops from Whoville ceilings to hermetically seal off potential rabble-rousers. (Those standing nearby

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Written by Mike Schulz

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no longer hear the agitators' rants - only muzak.) And the Seussian figures themselves are a continual joy to look at; one hilarious little weirdo resembles a furry Peyote button, and has the effect of one, too.

But while Seuss' famed rhymes are occasionally (erratically) employed, it doesn't take long to recognize that it's not the good doctor's voice we're hearing in the dialogue - it's Shrek's. With its smart-alecky wit and ceaseless comic riffing - even by characters, such as the stalwart Horton, who shouldn't *be* riffing - the movie has a \$300-million-or-bust vibe that's impossible to shake off; you sense a desperation on the part of the filmmakers, who, rightly or wrongly, don't trust their audience to accept the story's inherent sweetness without incessant wisecracking and lazy pop-culture references. (Was it really necessary to end with a group sing-along to REO Speedwagon's "Can't Fight This Feeling"?)

Even *Horton's* all-star casting feels *de rigueur*, yet I'd be lying if I didn't admit to being frequently tickled by the contributions of Steve Carell, Carol Burnett, and Will Arnett (a riot as a Russian vulture). And although, after *The Spiderwick Chronicles*, Seth Rogen is quickly becoming a voice-over drag, Jim Carrey, as our titular pachyderm, delivers some splendid Carrey-isms; the actor may be miscast, but he hasn't been this funny in years. Much of *Horton Hears a Who!* is a bummer, but at least it's spirited and frequently inventive, and besides - to paraphrase the source material's only moderately maligned author - a pleasure's a pleasure, no matter how small.



COLLEGE ROAD TRIP

There's no getting around it: *College Road Trip*, the G-rated Disney comedy in which pathologically overprotective father Martin Lawrence escorts daughter Raven-Symoné on a cross-country trek to Georgetown University, is

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terrible, terrible movie. Yet despite the moronic plotting and time-killing conceits (what's with the chess-playing pig?), it's a

fascinating

terrible, terrible movie, because its stars, and most of its supporting cast, are so grotesquely over-scaled that they leave you in a state of open-mouthed shock; just when you think the mugging of Lawrence, Raven-Symoné, Donny Osmond (!), and company has reached new peaks of shrieking, embarrassing excess, they somehow manage to pitch themselves even

higher

. (The movie is slightly louder than

Transformers

.)

I spent most of

College Road Trip

fighting off a migraine, but I can't say I was ever bored - who could possibly doze off during an 80-minute air-raid drill?



GRAND CANYON ADVENTURE: RIVER AT RISK

I feel like a jerk for admitting this, but after 40 minutes of the Putnam Museum & IMAX Theatre's new *Grand Canyon Adventure: River at Risk*, there's an abrupt cut to an overhead, nighttime shot of Las Vegas, and it was the first time watching the movie that I truly felt alert. I'm not Clark Griswold; I can appreciate the scenic wonders of the canyon, and (having never been there personally) am grateful for the chance to see them in IMAX splendor. It's just that, for this adult viewer at least, the movie itself is a bit of a stiff.

Filled as it is with information on the depletion of our national water supply, Greg MacGillivray's 3D opus has considerable merit as an educational tool for young children. (It's a little vague for the rest of us, though, especially when we're invited to hiss "the politicians" wanting to dam our rivers.) But viewed strictly as a film, the visual rapture is undone by pokey narrative detours, commentary that's even drier than the terrain, and too many pithy, meaningless bromides along the lines of "We may have changed the shape of the river, but we haven't changed the river's ability to shape us." (Your response to that is both "So true" and "Huh?") Plus, beyond the film's opening rafting sequence, there's really no reason at all for the 3D effects; after you've been

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splashed in the face

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Grand Canyon Adventure

is a big, beautiful, totally bland experience, and I left the auditorium less awed than eagerly anticipating a forthcoming IMAX tour of the Venetian Resort and the Golden Nugget.