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MEGAMIND

Since Universal Pictures' fizzy, funny animated hit *Despicable Me* was released a mere four months ago, it's hardly possible that DreamWorks' new *Megamind*

could be considered an intentional ripoff, despite a plot that also finds an über-villain gradually morphing into an über-hero. And despite the film's haughty, antagonistic protagonist performing his evil deeds alongside a goofy, tag-along minion. And despite this blobby little homunculus being

named

Minion. (Seriously, are there

no

fresh ideas in Hollywood?)

So what say we chalk this up to coincidence and enjoy director Tom McGrath's *Megamind* for what it is: a clever, quick-witted, and unexpectedly and

awfully

smart outing with marvelously vivid visuals and reams of hysterical dialogue. ("Good luck on your date!" shouts David Cross' peeved Minion to Will Ferrell's nefarious title character. "I

will

!" is the senseless reply.) Given the movie's predictable over-reliance on tired pop tunes for comic effect, it's still a bit DreamWorks-y for my tastes. But the vocal cast, which includes Tina

Written by Mike Schulz

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Fey, Jonah Hill, Brad Pitt, and J.K. Simmons, provides spirited fun, and for every gag that sputters, three more pop just right. The climactic group dance-along to Michael Jackson's "Bad"? Pretty lame. Ferrell's Megamind disguising himself as

Superman

's Jor-El

and telling his cape-wearing rival, with hilarious Marlon Brando inflections, "I am your fathuh, and you are my thun"? Pritheleth.



WAITING FOR "SUPERMAN"

You know that sensation you sometimes feel at a particularly moving film, when you find yourself tightening your stomach muscles to avoid sobbing out loud? I did that so frequently during *Waiting for "Superman"* that the movie was practically a lower-ab workout. Director Davis Guggenheim's expansive, informative, incensed-yet-level-headed documentary – a rallying cry for public-education reform in America – examines how our school systems are collectively failing our children, and given its admittedly one-sided perspective and the blame laid on our country's teachers' unions, it's sure to piss off many viewers. (Not all teachers, though, are likely to find the movie offensive. Just the bad ones.) But in its conversations with lauded educator Geoffrey Canada, recently resigned public-school chancellor Michelle Rhee, and others who've found surprising success in helping fix a seemingly unfixable system,

Waiting for "Superman"

is at least as inspiring as it is heartbreaking. And buoyed by touching interviews with five kids whose futures depend on their names being drawn in charter-school lotteries, the film is a smashingly entertaining real-life tear-jerker, even if some of its most amusing bits are also its most infuriating. "Research," says an on-screen figure, "shows that childrens do learn." Considering the person giving the grammatically incorrect quote is President George W. Bush, you don't know whether to laugh or scream.

Brains, Heart, Courage, and the Wizards of Odd: "Megamind," "Waiting for 'Superman,'" "For Colored Girls"

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