

FEATURE

'Stuart Little 2' is entertaining sequel

By Gerri Pare
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — His adventurous spirit intact, the plucky white mouse adopted by the Little family is back in the nearly-as-charming "Stuart Little 2" (Columbia).

Nestled across the street from Manhattan's Central Park, the contented Little household now has a baby girl, and Mom and Dad (Geena Davis and Hugh Laurie) couldn't be happier. Pint-size Stuart (voiced by Michael J. Fox) is game to do everything a normal boy like his brother George (Jonathan Lipnicki) does, but Mom is terrified Stuart could be hurt.

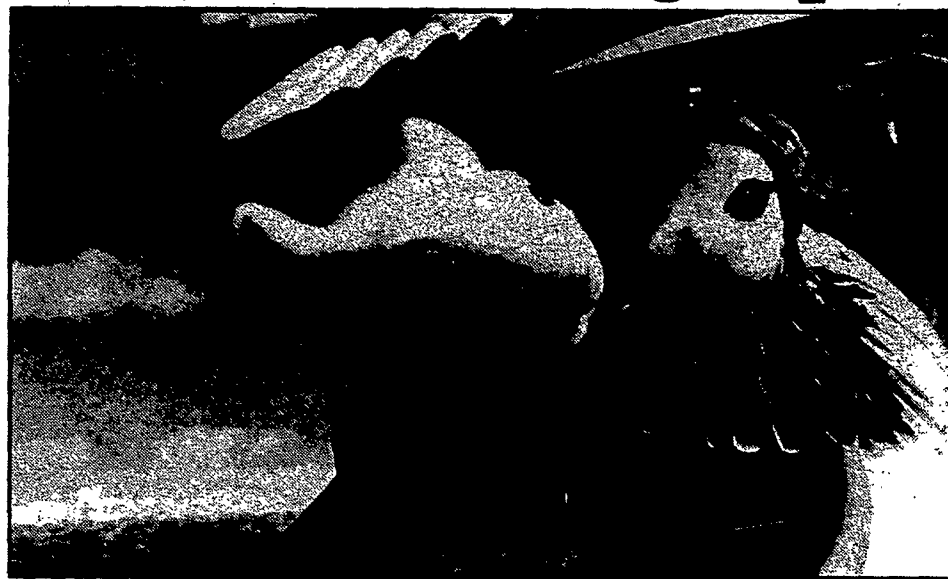
Minor misadventures on the soccer field and in a toy plane further convince Mom that George should keep Stuart in his sights at all times. But with George sometimes off playing with his pal, Will, Stuart's a little lonely — or a lonely Little.

Swooping into Stuart's life one day is Margalo (voiced by Melanie Griffith), a tiny golden bird apparently fleeing the vicious Falcon (voiced by James Woods). Stuart, instantly smitten, takes her in while her wing heals and all the Littles welcome her with open arms, even that fraidy-cat furball, Snowbell (voiced by Nathan Lane).

Unaccustomed to such caring kindness, Margalo, actually in cahoots with Falcon, feels terrible. When he threatens to devour Stuart if she doesn't steal from the Littles, she sadly complies and flies the coop.

Sure that Margalo has been snatched, Stuart enlists Snowbell to rescue her.

Meanwhile, George tells a little white lie to the big Littles lest they worry about their little white mouse who has gone missing. And soon the fur is flying when Falcon, Snowbell, alley cat Monty, our hero Stuart and his maiden-in-distress all collide over a dazzling diamond ring.



Sony Pictures/CNS

Stuart Little and Margalo become fast friends in the family comedy "Stuart Little 2."

Director Rob Minkoff is back to helm in the new adventure based on the characters from E.B. White's classic 1945 children's story. The colorful sequel retains the original's endearing qualities, although the story's freshness and originality suffer a bit. Sly humor (mostly from snippy Snowbell) liven the familiar situation and two birds add a new element. Less successful are the extremely obvious music track selections.

What's not obvious is how seamlessly the humans blend with (five) Persian cats playing Snowbell, and the animated creatures — whose fine detailing is amazing. The picture-postcard visuals of the Littles' townhouse and the romanticized New York City they live in are also handsomely realized.

Davis and Laurie are appealing as they teach their children such life lessons as seeing the silver lining in a cloud, and not lying. The movie also treats themes of

friendship, optimism, bravery and forgiveness in an upbeat, kid-friendly manner.

Scenes of the vicious Falcon's razor-sharp talons and an extended scene of a cab careening through Central Park with pedestrians in imminent danger make the movie a bit intense for very young children, and the cabbie mutters "hell" in passing.

For the over-7 to over-70 set, the spunky Stuart again proves to be a mighty mouse and a tiny treat.

Due to a few menacing scenes and brief naughty language, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

Pare is director of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Office for Film and Broadcasting.

Film reviews

NEW YORK (CNS) — Catholic reviews of movies recently reviewed by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Office for Film and Broadcasting and the Motion Picture Association of America include:

'Eight Legged Freaks'

Dopey horror flick in which an engineer (David Arquette) and a sheriff (Kari Wuhrer) try to save their mining town from murderous giant spiders. Director Elroy Elzayem combines a feeble comic tone with increasing chaos and mayhem. The plot's predictability renders it instantly forgettable. Fantasy violence, fleeting sexual innuendo and crass expressions. The USCCB classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The MPAA rating is PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

'K-19: The Widowmaker'

Fact-based Cold War 1961 submarine drama as the captain (Harrison Ford) and executive officer (Liam Neeson) clash onboard a Russian sub whose core reactor could melt down with catastrophic results. Directed by Kathryn Bigelow, the tense tale of honor and courage is marred by a sluggish pace and blunt characterizations. Brief violence, images of injured seamen and fleeting rear nudity. The USCCB classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The MPAA rating is PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.



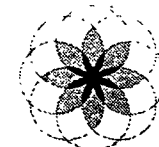
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