

'Piglet' teaches kids lesson

Anne Navarro/CNS

NEW YORK — Children learn that even a small person can make a big difference in the sweet animated adventure "Piglet's Big Movie" (Disney).

Director Francis Glebas' whimsical tale is bright and colorful with the familiar characters from the Hundred Acre Wood all taking part. The animation is playful and charming, doing justice to the literary creations of author A.A. Milne, who originated the characters. Refreshingly, "Piglet's Big Movie" is perfectly aimed at the younger set — no double entendres or wisecracking characters meant to court and entertain the adult chaperones. It is a simple, innocent story for the young ones to enjoy.

Children are likely to identify with little pink Piglet's feelings of frustration when his bigger pals tell him he's too small to join them in their "honey harvest." But when he disappears, Winnie the Pooh, Tigger (both voiced by Jim Cummings), Rabbit (voiced by Ken Sansom) and the rest of the gang set out to find him using Piglet's scrapbook for clues to his whereabouts. Along their journey, they discover that tiny Piglet has been a big hero in a lot of ways.

"Piglet's Big Movie" features the vocal talents of John Fiedler in his 35th year as the humble, hospitable Piglet. Fiedler is the last member of Disney's original "Winnie the Pooh"



Buena Vista Pictures/CNS

Piglet and Winnie the Pooh sit on a log to think in the Walt Disney film "Piglet's Big Movie." The movie is a simple story perfectly aimed at the younger audience, unlike many children's movies which contain material meant to entertain adult chaperones.

cast to continue providing the voice of his character. The rest of the cast is superb, especially Cummings. It is difficult to imagine that such distinct voices as Pooh's and Tigger's come from the same vocal cords, but Cummings accomplishes this with apparent ease.

A big disappointment is the film's soundtrack, which was largely com-

posed and sung by Carly Simon. Most of the songs have a bouncy, albeit forgettable, beat. But they blend into one another, with few well-defined characteristics.

The USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classification is A-I — general patronage. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is G — general audiences.

Navarro is on the staff of the Office for Film & Broadcasting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Stephen King's 'Dreamcatcher' lacks suspense

Anne Navarro/CNS

NEW YORK — Four boyhood friends use their supernatural gifts to battle an invading alien force in the grisly horror thriller "Dreamcatcher" (Warner Bros.).

Adapted from the novel by Stephen King, the "Dreamcatcher" story is a retread of familiar themes in the fright master's work: children bonded together by some incident who then reunite as adults to fight an evil force afoot in the world. This time around, the narrative includes a sci-fi aspect in the form of invading aliens who take over people's bodies. As directed by Lawrence Kasdan, the film is initially intriguing, fooling the audience into thinking that it will be an unnerving trip through the snowy woods where it is set. But the film becomes unwieldy, forgoing the initial suspense and tension for slimy special effects that produce yawns (and sometimes

laughter) instead of screams.

As kids living in a small town in Maine, Jonesy (Damian Lewis), Henry (Thomas Jane), Beaver (Jason Lee) and Pete (Timothy Olyphant), saved a handicapped boy named Duddits from school bullies. As a result, the boys were somehow endowed with the powers of telepathy and precognition. Twenty years later, the men reunite for their annual visit to a hunting cabin. But when a lost hunter appears with a suspicious red splotch on his face, suffering from hypothermia and some pretty intense gastro-intestinal problems, their cozy retreat turns sinister.

The hunter's upset stomach is actually an alien in the form of a giant, slimy, razor-toothed worm that slithers out of the hunter's body in what can only be described as the worst possible bowel movement a human can experience. Gross for sure, but some tongue-in-cheek humor would have greased the wheels of this ve-

hicle. Instead, the film takes itself very seriously, and the audience can't keep a straight — or frightened — face as two of the foursome are quickly killed off by the slithering serpentine.

Morgan Freeman stars as a tough alien hunter who commands a top-secret military task force whose purpose is to eradicate the alien invaders and contain the red, spotty virus it spreads. But the miscast Freeman spouts such ridiculous lines that his hard-edged commander is more caricature than character. And Freeman looks as bored with playing this character as the viewer is seeing him do it.

The subplot of his commander going over the edge — willing even to take human lives to contain the alien disease — while his second-in-command (Tom Sizemore) attempts to stop him, feels like scenes from a different movie spliced in as an excuse to blow up a helicopter.

The connection to all these bizarre happenings is Duddits — who is played as an adult by Donnie Wahlberg with a shaved head and heavy makeup to make Duddits look extremely ill. But by the time he enters the movie, it's late in the game and the viewer has already tuned out.

In the end, "Dreamcatcher's" initial potential disappears as the film's structural problems take over like the unsightly crusty alien virus that spreads from human to human.

Because of grotesque violence and recurring rough language and profanity with some coarse sexual references, the USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classification is A-IV — adults, with reservations. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

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Capsules

NEW YORK (CNS) — The following are capsule reviews of movies reviewed by the Office for Film & Broadcasting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

'BOAT TRIP'

Exceedingly crass comedy in which a heartbroken man (Cuba Gooding Jr.), recently dumped by his girlfriend (Yvonne A. Fox), is mistakenly booked on a gay cruise where he falls for the gorgeous Latin dance instructor (Roselyn Sanchez). A few vulgar sexual encounters, many base sexual references, some mildly fleeting drug content and intermittent rough language and profanity. The USCCB classification is R — morally offensive. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

'THE GUYS'

Moving drama in which a New York City journalist (Sigourney Weaver) is asked to help a fire captain (Anthony LaPaglia) write a series of eulogies for the firefighters he lost at the World Trade Center as they both struggle to come to terms with the event. An instance of crass language. The USCCB classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The MPAA rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

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