

# '80 Days' deemed surprisingly satisfying

David DiCerto/CNS

NEW YORK — An eccentric inventor and his sidekick embark on a globetrotting adventure in order to win an outrageous wager in the lavish, family-friendly romp, "Around the World in 80 Days."

Based on the classic yarn by Jules Verne and directed by Frank Coraci, the film combines action, romance and heaping dollops of madcap comedy to serve up an entertaining, continent-hopping spectacle that is both campy and clever — and, as an added attraction — quite fun.

Opening in Victorian-era London, the film stars Steve Coogan as the visionary techno-tinkerer Phileas Fogg, an armchair adventurer who, desperate to gain the respect of his critics at the stuffy Royal Academy of Science, makes an outlandish gentleman's bet to circumnavigate the globe in no more than 80 days.

Action-star Jackie Chan co-stars as Passepartout, his lightning-limbed traveling companion whom viewers first meet fleeing a phalanx of bumbling Bobbies after robbing the Bank of London. As it turns out, Passepartout was sent from China to recover from the bank's vault a sacred jade statue of Buddha which was stolen from his village by a female Asian assassin named General Fang (Karen Joy Morris). Also along for the riotous ride is Monique (Cecile de France), a French tart with an eye for art and a nose for adventure.

Their journey by land, air and sea takes the trio on a whirlwind tour of the world's most exotic locales, including pit stops for centerpiece action sequences in Paris, Istanbul, India, China and the American West. But their path is fraught with obstacles, set by Lord Kelvin (Jim Broadbent), the head of the Royal Academy who, working in cahoots with Fang, wants to discredit Phileas.



Disney/CNS

Cecile de France, Steve Coogan and Jackie Chan star in the Disney action-adventure film "Around the World in 80 Days."

Along the way they learn gushy lessons about friendship and loyalty, encountering a host of celebrity cameos including Luke and Owen Wilson as the Wright brothers, Kathy Bates as Queen Victoria and a shock-wigged Arnold Schwarzenegger as a vain Turkish vizier.

Taken for what it is — eye-candy — "Around the World in 80 Days" is surprisingly satisfying. Like the helium that lifts Phileas' balloon high above the Champs d'Elysee, the film's lighthearted levity elevates it above the smash-and-crash action clones glutting summer screens. Much of this is owed to the appealing pairing of Coogan and Chan (roles

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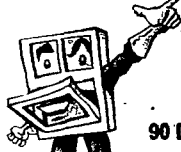
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played by David Niven and Cantinflas in the Oscar-winning 1956 film version), whose onscreen chemistry makes up for many of the flick's shortcomings. And while Jules Verne probably didn't envision kung-fu fights along the Rive Gauche, Chan never ceases to amaze with his high-flying feats, and feet.

Though it runs a bit too long,

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