

Review – The Muppets



by Ryan McNeely

The Muppets

Go. Just go. Right now.

I am so, so very happy. This is the Muppets movie I deserve. Jason Segel gets it. He understands. As fun as Muppet Treasure Island and Christmas Carol were, the Muppets don't belong in other people's stories. They belong in their own world of joyful lunacy. Tonally a direct sequel to The Great Muppet Caper of 1981, this is Kermit's Rocky Balboa – the former champ brought out of retirement to see if he still has the magic – but with songs.

The story starts when Gary (Segel) takes his brother Walter on a trip to Los Angeles to see the old Muppet Studio, only for Gary to overhear evil millionaire oil magnate Tex Richman's evil plan to take over the studio when The Muppets' Standard Rich And Famous contract expires so that he can bulldoze the building to get at the oil underneath.

The only way Richman can be stopped is by The Muppets raising \$10 million by the end of the week. Of course the only way to raise \$10 million by the end of the week is to put on a show. The problem with that plan is The Muppets haven't performed together in years.

And so begins the most fun "getting the band back together" story I've seen in forever. Yes, even more fun than The Blues Brothers.



You're imagining 80s Robot doing the "106 miles to Chicago" bit now, aren't you?

I think what I love about this film the most is the absolute lack of cynicism. It is very difficult to make a film sweet without crossing over into saccharine garbage, but The Muppets walks that tightrope expertly, so much so that I didn't even feel the least bit manipulated when I got a bit misty at the big emotional climax. It helps that Segel is in the flick though.

Since I first saw him in Freaks and Geeks more than ten years ago, two things have been apparent about Jason Segel as an actor: his innocence and his absolute fearlessness. This is the guy who wrote a ten minute long comedy nude scene for himself in his first produced screenplay, yet his dream project has been The Muppets.



From American Beauty to this? Now that's a career jump.

As well as Segel of course, the rest of the cast are fantastic. Chris Cooper as Tex is my new comedy god on the strength of one scene alone. Even though I knew it was coming, I was still in stitches throughout.

I'm not going to tell you any more than that, so don't even ask. But if you have seen the flick you know what I'm talking about. What can I say about Amy Adams? Beautiful, fun, obviously game for anything and a hell of a singer. None of that is really surprising anymore, but it is always a joy to see anyway. Her duet with Miss Piggy is hilarious and kind of touching both at the same time.

Speaking of the songs, Bret (Flight of the Conchords) McKenzie has done a great job writing new ones that not only stick to the spirit of the original-era Muppets songs but can sit alongside them. Man Or Muppet is going to be a classic in

years to come, whether it wins the Oscar or not (although it totally should). And when Rainbow Connection comes on, trust me, you will be singing along.



Future Oscar winner Bret McKenzie

Normally this is the point where I would start having a bit of a moan about the parts that disappointed me, or that weren't up to snuff. This section is going to a bit slim today since I can't actually think of anything, except maybe for the standard of some of the celebrity cameos. I let out a bit of a cheer (by myself – bunch of Philistines) when Mickey Rooney appeared, but the kid from Modern Family? Really? Hell, even Kermit didn't recognise him. But if that's the only complaint about a film, I think we're on to a winner. I'll tell you what though, don't take my word for it. You've got a whole weekend in front of you. Drag your lazy, cynical carcasses down to your nearest cooperating movie house and come out two hours later with a spring in your step and a song in your heart. You can thank me later.

Ryan McNeely's film reviews can be read here on his own site

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