

Movie Reviews: The Brothers Grimm

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If you are in the mood to see a dark thriller, *The Brothers Grimm* is not for you. However, if you're up for a kooky comedy about fairy tales, then this is a movie you will enjoy. Directed by Terry Gilliam (*Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, *Twelve Monkeys*, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*), *The Brothers Grimm* is a fun and entertaining movie.

The story focuses around the two Grimm brothers, Will and Jacob. Will, played by Matt Damon (*The Bourne Identity*, *Good Will Hunting*, *Ocean's Eleven*), is the more headstrong of the two. Heath Ledger (*10 Things I Hate About You*, *The Patriot*, *A Knight's Tale*) plays the timid, scholarly brother. At the beginning of the movie we see them fight courageously to save a town from an evil spirit, for a small fee of course. Soon afterwards we learn that they are merely clever con men. Will revels in their fame while Jacob becomes increasingly more frustrated

at the sham his education is supporting. Before moving on the next town they will "save," the brothers are arrested by the French army. They are exposed as frauds but they are given a deal. They will be allowed to live if they can stop whoever is responsible for girls mysteriously vanishing from a little village. The Grimm brothers set off for the village expecting to find a fellow impostor. Instead they are faced with an evil, magical force that is stealing the little girls. With the help of an eccentric woman from the village and the French commander keeping tabs on them, the two brothers must figure out a way to overcome true evil.

This movie is particularly enjoyable because it doesn't take itself too seriously. It doesn't profess to be anything more remarkable than a comedy. There is no pretense of being an Oscar-worthy drama. It is sprinkled liberally with funny lines and comical situations, which firmly establish it as a comedy, rather than a horror film. It doesn't go down that road; it sticks with humor and action and succeeds in being

pure and simple fun.

The plot was particularly appealing because it had little fragments of all the fairy tales that we know and love. They aren't all glaringly obvious; you have to pay attention to catch some. There are allusions to Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, Hansel and Gretel, and Rapunzel—just to name a few. I enjoyed keeping an eye out for little elements that referred to stories I loved when I was a child. I thought it was a clever idea to pretend that all the Grimm Brothers' stories came from their own experiences with magic.

Matt Damon and Heath Ledger were charming as the main characters. They worked very well together as the two brothers who depend on each other but frequently don't get along. Will is the dominant sibling—he gives the orders and makes the decisions. Jacob is lost in his imaginary world of magical beings and happily ever after. Once they realize that they are dealing with true magic and not some clever trickster, Jacob takes control, and it is his knowledge that guides them. Will struggles

with the new situation and his lack of control. I enjoyed their performances very much. They did a wonderful job creating believable characters that I cared about.

Some of the characters were slightly overdone, such as the French General Delatombe (Jonathan Pryce) and his underling Cavaldi (Peter Stormare). The aura of goofy comedy went a little too far with them, although kids will probably get a kick out of them. Cavaldi in particular was annoying every time he was in a scene. I was disappointed that his character played such a significant part. Matt Damon and Heath Ledger could get away with some ridiculousness, but it just didn't work as well with Peter Stormare, probably because he had no corresponding serious side to balance the performance out.

The setting for the film is great. The dense and wild woods are very convincing as the home of an evil magic. The village set is very believable. My only quarrel with the visuals is the special effects. They really weren't very good. Perhaps

in this age of Gollum and the new Star Wars movies we've acquired very high expectations. However it is very possible that the effects weren't topnotch on purpose. If the trees moving to block the exit had looked too real, then the movie probably would have lost its comedic appeal. It would have felt more like a horror film instead of maintaining its lighthearted feel. I'm willing to give Gilliam the benefit of the doubt because I really did enjoy the movie.

Overall I would recommend this movie, but only if you don't take it too seriously. Recognize it for the fun movie it was meant to be, and don't expect too much. It's rated PG-13 and will appeal to kids of all ages. It would be fun for a night out with friends, a date, or a family afternoon. You will leave the theater in a good mood, thinking about all the stories you used to love as a kid. I was even tempted to pull out my old fairytale books because I couldn't quite remember all the details!

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If you are looking for a light movie that is sure to bring you back to your childhood memories of bedtime stories with mom, Terry Gilliam's *The Brothers Grimm* is not worth your seven dollar investment. However, if you are interested in watching a darker film that incorporates all of your favorite fairytale characters into a twisted plot with two strapping young actors, the film will certainly do the trick.

Set in early nineteenth century France, the movie's central plot revolves around two brothers, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm (Heath Ledger and Matt Damon) who travel

around the countryside masquerading as though they can eliminate evil. They are able to eliminate evil, but only the evil they create. They successfully operate under the line, "No curse we can't reverse. No spell we can't break. No demon we can't exterminate." However, just as the brothers are at the height of their fraudulent fame, they are forced to prove themselves as they encounter a legitimately haunted forest. Young girls from a nearby village are disappearing and the brothers suspect that the forest may have something to do with their disappearances. The brothers find that they can no longer rely on their schemes and acting; they must now find genuine courage if they

are to defeat the evil that has control of the forest around the small village. Jacob and Wilhelm must learn to trust one another and Angelika (Lena Headey), an orphaned woman from the village whose two sisters are among the missing girls.

Along the way, the Grimm brothers find themselves increasingly enchanted by events from famous fairytales. The fairytale characters' appearances coincide with the disappearances of the girls. One girl who disappears is Little Red Riding Hood. Another girl is Gretel. Perhaps in the most disturbing exploitation of a fairytale character, one girl is eaten by *The Gingerbread Man*. As the brothers journey deeper into the forest they find that

they are presented with numerous unforeseen obstacles that hinder their progress towards finding all of the girls. The youngest Grimm brother finds that at the heart of the forest a cursed queen is dictating the actions of the abductor. Now the brothers must stop the queen and find the girls while fighting the temptation to become part of the tale. All the while, Jacob Grimm is recording the events.

The movie displays a unique interpretation of the fairytale characters. As the movie progresses, it is clear that director Terry Gilliam exhibited a good degree of artistic license with childhood favorites such as *The Gingerbread Man*. Gilliam's *The Brothers Grimm* casts

a dark shadow on tales that were always carefree and light. As a result, the film's PG-13 rating is necessary. Young children may be disturbed to watch their favorite snack time sweet treat, *The Gingerbread Man*, devour a young girl.

The characters hardly ever take one another seriously, making it hard for the audience to sympathize with them. Even when the brothers are about to be burned with the enchanted forest, they continue to make light of what is supposed to be a deadly situation. Therefore, what could have been a suspenseful scene is completely avoided because it is im-

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