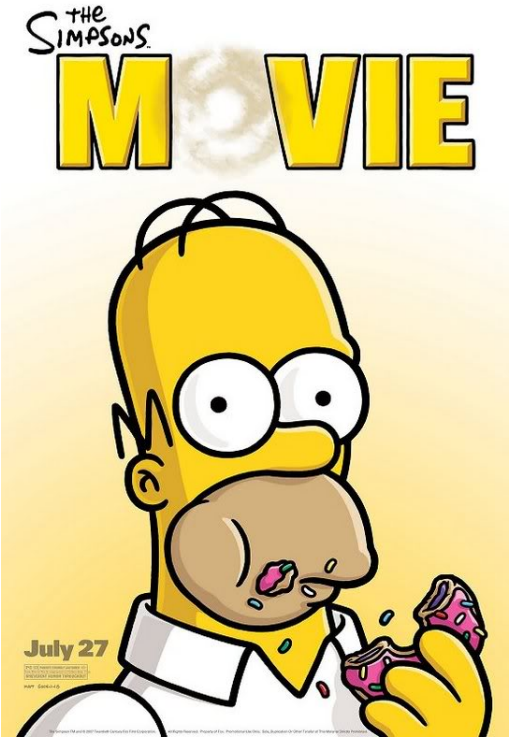
Eighteen years after bursting onto the scene, Homer, Marge, Lisa, Maggie, and especially Bart Simpson finally make their big screen debut in “The Simpsons Movie”, and it is as subversive, satirical, and irreverent as those of us that were fans of those early years could expect. We sent Mitch off to the theaters to review the film for us ...



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“Why would anyone PAY for something they can watch at home for FREE?”, Homer blurts out after the family has sat through a “feature length” (3 minutes in real-people’s time) “Itchy and Scratchy” movie that was as hilariously violent as it has always been. Good question, Homer…but as one of the people plopping down the D’oh, I would answer that it’s just because I enjoy seeing something that flat out makes me laugh. And if the movie is really nothing more than an 84 minute version of the 22 minute television show; that’s OK. At least it’s a version of the first years of the show, where slapstick comedy is served in large quantities, heavily laced with satiric sticks to the eye, anarchic mayhem, and just enough sweetness to keep it all human…even if they are all yellow humans.

Like most of the television episodes, we follow the local denizens of Springfield (in a state that borders Ohio. And Kentucky. So that makes it Indiana or West Virginia? Maybe…except that it also borders California and Maine). Following two events we'd expect in "The Simpsons" world…a concert on the polluted lake that kills all the members of the group Greenday and Lisa's humorous attempt to out-Gore Al Gore with "An Irritating Truth", the people finally band together to clean up the lake.

As always, you can always count on Homer to screw things up. Having saved the life of a pig destined for Krusty the Clown's butcher, Homer adopts the porker, and proceeds to treat him better than his own children. As the pig waste builds up, Homer must find something to do with it, and rather than dispose of it responsibly, he dumps it in the lake, with catastrophic results that lead to the endangerment of the entire city. After the family escapes with their lives from the mob of pitchfork and torch carrying citizens, Homer revels in a new life, but later realizes that he must go back and save the town from a power-hungry EPA bureaucrat (wonderfully voiced by Albert Brooks).

You also get to see Lisa at her awkward nerdy best with a new crush; an Irish lad named Colin, who is NOT Bono's son, and Bart actually cozying up to Flanders as he learns love isn't always handed out by having your dad wrapping both hands around your neck and squeezing.

The jokes are rapid fire, and like a machine gun, some hit their mark and some don't…but the target is always pretty much everything; government, religion, old-age, schoolyard bullies, fast food, the environment, current pop culture, and even Fox Television. Let me rephrase that: ESPECIALLY Fox Television, whose support of the movie was seen by the creators of The Simpsons as mediocre at best.

The staple of the show over the last few years, often to its detriment, has been the reliance on celebrity guest voices. Luckily, the movie doesn't lean on that crutch too often, only utilizing the opening scene with Greenday, and a cute cameo from

Tom Hanks taking a jab at both his own image as “Mr. Credibility” and the government…which happens to be controlled by none other than President Arnold Schwarzenegger (although voiced by Harry Shearer, and not the Governator himself).

All in all, it’s quite a satisfactory bit of nostalgia for those of us that were fans of the early years, but have not followed it much lately. It doesn’t attempt to expand into new territory, as was seen in the “South Park” movie, although it does take advantage of its PG-13 rating by slipping in a couple of bits of naughtiness; Bart’s naked skateboarding trip utilizing the same strategic placement of objects used for “Austin Powers”, a surprising moderate swear word from Marge to shock Homer into finishing his work, and an implied sex scene where cute animals help Marge and Homer in their courting…and then have their eyes bulge and jaws drop in horror as they “look on” at the “festivities”.

High art? Nowhere close. Brave new territories explored? Nah. But it does pluck the nostalgia strings back to a time when it was all new and fresh and diabolically clever. Mostly; it made me laugh. Often. Sometimes with just a wry smile, and sometimes with side splitting belly laughs. And what else do you need, man? If you don’t like it, then eat my shorts.

My Rating: Bill Nelsen (2 ½ footballs)

Review Key:

Otto Graham: Over 4 Footballs. HOF quality movie

Bernie Kosar: 4 Footballs. Excellent. Top 10 for the year caliber

Brian Sipe: 3 ½ Footballs. Very Good.

Frank Ryan: 3 Footballs. Good, solid film.

Bill Nelsen: 2 ½ Footballs. OK. Worth seeing at the theater.

Kelly Holcomb: 2 Footballs. Disappointingly inconsistent but some bright spots. Rent it on DVD.

Tim Couch: 1 ½ Footballs. Poor. Had potential, but lack of support led to an overall stinker.

Jeff Garcia: 1 Football. Horrible. All hype; no performance.

Mike Phipps: ½ Football. “We gave away Paul Warfield for THIS?” level of suck

Spergeon Wynn: No Footballs. UberSuckitude personified.

Charlie Frye: Incomplete.