

Mr. Peabody & Sherman Movie Review

by Brett Cooper



Do you remember the old *Peabody's Improbable History* cartoons? They were occasionally featured on *The Rocky and Bullwinkle Show*. Yes? Kinda? Nope? Doesn't matter. It's history.

Thanks in part to a modern animation extreme makeover, the new film *Mr. Peabody & Sherman*, an updated tale of "the world's most accomplished dog" (Peabody) and "his mischievous boy" (Sherman), should appeal to fans of the old cartoons, families of young children, history buffs and anyone who values the power of adoption.

The movie's canvas is appealing: classic cartoon, pun-centric comedy, time travel tropes and the plundering of historical treasures and stereotypes of Ancient Egypt, Ancient Greece, the Renaissance and the French Revolution. More appealing, though, is the film's colorful content, its tenderly painted adoption love story.

It goes like this (warning - skip next paragraph to avoid SPOILERS):

Dog adopts boy. Boy meets girl. Girl ridicules boy. ("You're a dog!") Boy bites girl. (Oops.) Dog invites girl and parents for a let's-all-be-civilized-about-this-and-avoid-a-lawsuit dinner party. Boy takes girl on time machine joy ride. Chaos ensues. Boy learns about history and about his dad. Boy forgives dad for being different. ("I'm a dog!" Sherman says proudly in the end.)

As the father of four young men, all transracially adopted, two locally and two internationally, I am a sucker for adoption stories. And yet I believe that a good adoption story appeals to people in general because we can all relate. The struggle to fit in is universal. Fitting into a new family is not unlike fitting in at a new school or a new job or with a new group of friends. Don't we all adopt new identities throughout our lives?

The movie's voice work is strong. Ty Burrell is delightfully unrecognizable as the remarkably-cultured mutt with the red bow tie. Allison Janney is pitch perfect as a snobbish woman who judges Peabody as unfit for parenthood. ("I don't know what just happened, but I know it's WRONG!") Stanley Tucci lays it on thick as a Roberto Benigni-esque bumbling, avuncular Leonardo DaVinci. ("Children are not machines, Peabody. I tried to build one. It was... creepy.") Even the legendary Mel Brooks gets in on the action, portraying Albert Einstein in a brief role that manages to be warm and fuzzy even when reprising Dustin Hoffman's iconic Ratso Rizzo turn from *Midnight Cowboy*. ("I'm walking here!")

If you prefer your humor whimsical and clever, not caustic, you'll appreciate *Mr. Peabody & Sherman's* light touch.

For example:

Peabody telling of how, after the world rejected him, he channeled his energies toward enculturation and achievement: "I received my degree from Harvard. Valedogtorian, of course."

Robespierre declaring to an NYC policeman: "I take orders from no man!" - and then looking like a spasmodic buffoon as he gets tased.

Agamemnon, witnessing this: "Don't tase me, bro."

Einstein nearly completing a Rubik's cube, then hucking it to the ground in disgust.

Washington and Lincoln high-fiving in climactic jubilation.

In the beginning of the movie, Sherman says, "I love you, Dad." To which Peabody replies, "I have a high regard for you as well, Sherman."

I love this movie. I have a high regard for it as well.