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HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON 2

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DRAGON 2 (2014)

Cast

Jay Baruchel as Hiccup (voice)

Cate Blanchett as Valka (voice)

Gerard Butler as Stoick the Vast (voice)

Craig Ferguson as Gobber (voice)

America Ferrera as Astrid (voice)

Jonah Hill as Snotlout (voice)

Christopher Mintz-Plasse as Fishlegs (voice)

T. J. Miller as Tuffnut (voice)

Kristen Wiig as Ruffnut (voice)

Djimon Hounsou as Drago Bludvist (voice)

June 13, 2014 | 12

What the sea was to "[Finding Nemo](#)," the sky is to "How to Train Your Dragon 2"—a boundary-free backdrop of natural beauty that allows the audience to experience first-hand the wonders down below or up above in an immersive way that only the best in 3-D animation can do.

In fact, the sequel to DreamWorks' highest-grossing cartoon feature that doesn't star a grouchy green ogre whose name rhymes with "heck" is the unusual second chapter that hits new heights in almost every way. Just the soaring and swooping dragon-racing aerial stunts (a regular occurrence now that all the residents of the dank burg of Berk are co-existing peacefully with the steed-like creatures) that consume the opening minutes are worthy of a Viking edition of Cirque de Soleil.

But what truly impresses isn't just the depiction of the primordial and often cruel environs so vividly realized, you can practically feel the icy air, wind and water slapping against your skin. Nor is it how sleekly leathery hero dragon, Toothless, retains his fierce, wild nature despite continuing to be as friskily playful as a newborn pup. Or how [Gerard Butler](#) manages to give one of his finest performances by relying only on his native Scottish burr as Stoick, a Viking chief in the twilight of his reign as he prepares to pass the torch to his brainy and now slightly more brawny son, Hiccup ([Jay Baruchel](#)).

Instead, what got to me was my moist-eyed appreciation of a long-ago-married couple,

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Kit Harington as Eret, Son of Eret (voice)

Director

Dean DeBlois

Screenplay

Dean DeBlois

Story

Cressida Cowell

Action, Adventure, Animation

Rated PG for adventure action and some mild rude humor.

102 minutes

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suddenly reunited after 20 years apart, who are surprised to discover that the embers of love still burn inside of them. How many fast-paced blockbusters actually bother to find room for a breather that is touching, tender and real—especially in an entertainment largely aimed at kids. Add to that an impassioned ballad, "For the Dancing and the Dreaming," that acts as a renewal of vows and it just might be one of the summer's best romantic movie moments.

That the relationship causes the peg-legged handyman and trainer of novice Vikings, Gobber the Belch ([Craig Ferguson](#), the perfect feisty sidekick for Butler), to actually stride out of the closet in a subtle spoken aside is a rarity of its own in a PG-rated arena like this.

Oddly enough, the battles with evil forces who wish to enslave the dragons into an army are the least interesting portion of the film. Director/screenwriter Dean DuBlois, soloing this time without partner [Chris Sanders](#), falls prey to the more-is-more school of sequel-dom. There are two villains, one a hunky young sea-faring mercenary known as Eret (Kit Harrington of "Game of Thrones"), the other a merciless madman called Drago Bludvist ([Djimon Hounsou](#) of "[Gladiator](#)" fame) whose very name strikes fear. There are also two massive white beasts that look like something that would result if Jabba the Hutt and the Kraken had an offspring.

At least Eret gives [Kristen Wiig](#) as Ruffnut, the Viking answer to the man-hungry young [Carol Burnett](#) and one of Hiccup's cohorts, a chance to inject some humor in the form of openly lusting over the pirate's bulging pecs. Also scene stealers are the poor sheep with their forlorn [Buster Keaton](#) faces (they seem inspired by the Aardman-created woolies in the Serta mattress commercials), who must endure being scoring objects during the dragon-racing games.

One of the better additions, however, is recent Oscar winner [Cate Blanchett](#) as the voice of Valka, a sort of New Age hermit who devotes herself to being a Jane Goodall-like protector of dragons, especially those who have been hurt or abused, and who shares Hiccup's preference for peace over war. This "crazy feral vigilante dragon lady" hides out in an ice-protected sanctuary where her flock of brightly hued charges flutter around like butterflies amid lush foliage and waterfalls.

As in the first "Dragon," the film doesn't shy away from the harsh realities faced by this clan of warriors with chests as broad as meat lockers at a time when loss of limb and often death was a routine fact of life. What truly sets this animated franchise apart from countless others is how it wears its heart openly and honestly atop its armor. If anyone is concerned about the way women are presented on the big screen these days, just look at how an evolved male like Hiccup respectfully treats his girlfriend Astrid ([America Ferrera](#)) and the portrayal of Blanchett's Valka.

But the most rewarding and complex relationship rightfully remains the one between Hiccup and Toothless. In these films, they are as inseparable as Roy Rogers and Trigger.

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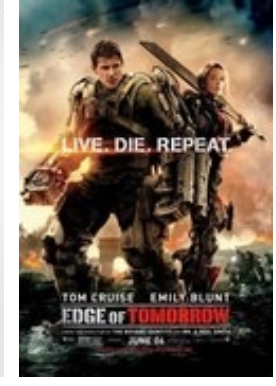
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12 Comments

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clarem · 15 days ago

Dragon action sequences were great. The human drama sequences were strange and improbable that a mother would abandon her beloved child after dragons. In fact, the scenes where she "connects" with Hiccup and creeped me out. And when Stoic sang to her to woo her again..utterly unforced and contrived. I loved the first movie which emotionally seemed to fit the tone in this movie is so fake it detracted for me from the wonderful dragon action. I should have stayed with. And bringing in that strange dragon wrangler character was a bad impression at one point there was almost something going to happen but it was very damn weird. I only enjoyed Toothless and Hiccup's scenes really...and the dragon horned in so there would be enough requisite human drama and dragon money making sequel...what a wasted opportunity.

6 ^ | ▾ · Reply · Share ▸



davidbonzaisaldanamontgomery · 16 days ago

Jonah Hill is gonna have a good weekend at the box office.

5 ^ | ▾ · Reply · Share ▸



Phillip · 16 days ago

Loved the original, really looking forward to this one.

5 ^ | ▾ · Reply · Share ▸



Rorshach Sridhar · 14 days ago

I couldn't get into this series b/c Jay Baruchel's voice is so annoying.

8 ^ | ▾ · Reply · Share ▸



Goatlama → Rorshach Sridhar · 11 days ago

GOOD LORD YES

It was tolerable in the first one, but another couple hours of it? A

5 ^ | ▾ · Reply · Share ▸



Goatllama · 11 days ago

Sickly sweet review. I don't think I'd compare it to Finding Nemo, maybe was just fine. 2-3 stars seems fairer than a half away from perfect. I mean The plot's pretty lame, though character development was very solid with his mother as half crazy was bold and made me uncomfortable (I consider was boring as hell. Best visual was either his mother rising from the clouds their mouths within the cave. Easily the best parts of the movie. Other than going for it. A whole lotta blurry, multicolor dragons speeding around the

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



CommonSense033 · 4 days ago

"at how an evolved male like Hiccup respectfully treats his girlfriend Astrid. Evolved? What's that supposed to mean?

A long time ago, men opened doors for women, pulled out chairs for the respect. They did, however, remain MEN, not handwringing metrosexuals in front of a woman to protect her from danger, while I expect most these c

Seriously? Why would that comment be injected into an otherwise decent film? Someone's spent too much time in Hollywood.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Kevan Lee · 7 days ago

I like this compare to the first. Very rarely you get some good sequel I guess the human part seems forced but overall it is still ranking first on 2014 cartoons on it.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



treehouse library · 8 days ago

Lately, I've been appreciating the history of children's story book illustrations talent-packed in the first half of the twentieth century. When this movie's top illustrators of the past would evaluate the visuals of this movie. It's as if machines didn't exist back then because half of those illustrators would despair if they knew what great things lay in the far future. I've generally enjoyed recent CGI-animation but this is the most visually breathtaking CGI film ever unified - like a single, highly gifted artist painstakingly worked (for about a decade) to produce it. A movie like this proves that no number of cooks will necessarily spoil the soup. The scenery and dragon designs (toothless and the albatross) are inspired enough to impress any artist anywhere, which is really saying something. Well-designed "costumes" like the mother's mask also the one primarily responsible for the design? Anyway, somebody definitely deserves an award.

This film wasn't made for somebody my age, so I wasn't hasty about judging that it wasn't bad (I came to a different opinion about a recent "large movie" unfortunately for me that just as the technology of animation seems to be improving, the makers are trying to stuff their films with as much fast action and fast dialogue as they can. There were many moments when I found myself thinking, "Wait! I'm not getting it." For example, a close up of a spotted dragon's foot holding down a bad guy didn't allow me to appreciate the rich texture of the dragon skin. I think they need to release a special feature with nothing but these dragons being themselves - sort of a "nature documentary" minute special feature on the DVD would probably be enough. I also wish the visually represented dragon flight in a way that matched this film's flying

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



WarrenHound · 12 days ago

SPOILERS Beware watched the how to train your dragon 2..as the director said it was more of an "older" film . there have also been some "hints" of Gobber being gay...honestly 1. dont see the big deal not like the animation. 2. the hint was really...not even there .,wasnt my first thought married...that and one other thing" < is not really an "I am Gay!" thought him being more open about it in the third movie though again...PG for obnoxious kids... but not R rated. i do NOT see the issue -.- people are insane. dragon the animation is fantastic storyline is pretty original coming from have not hidden any of this its not a movie meant for kids under at least

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Madd Coww → WarrenHound · 2 days ago

I agree. I read this review after I saw the film. Re Gobber's gay reveal, the "other thing" might as well have been that he had a wife revealed onscreen (maybe that's in the third film). Though I'd seen that Ruffnut and Tuffnut are actually boy and girl and not identical when Ruffnut starts visibly lusting over Eret, when there was not that Ruffnut was female. My first (incorrect) impression was that progressive for a PG film. I truly enjoyed this film, and surprising jokes which now seem to be a characteristic of a PG animated film

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Ben Wang · 16 days ago

The action scenes were one of the things that impressed me the most about with regard to the action, this is one of the best movies I've seen in a while than that from this movie, and it delivered on that front. Even so, I liked

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