

# 'Hotel Transylvania': Monsters Can Be Funny

In a world where humans fear monsters and zombies, enterprising vampire Count Dracula (Adam Sandler) builds a secret castle getaway for monsters from all over the world to relax and have a screaming-good time.

Dracula has invited his monster friends to the hotel for daughter Mavis' (Selena Gomez) 118th birthday bash. Jonathan, a human (Andy Samberg), stumbles across the castle. He takes an interest in Mavis. Now, Dracula must choose between the safety of the castle and his daughter's happiness. With a fully booked hotel and a big party to plan, this is one hairy problem to solve.

From Sony Pictures Animation, *Hotel Transylvania* is not your typical animated monster movie. There are a few frightening moments, but the fright element is mostly treated humorously. Instead, what takes center stage are the colorful characters and great comedy. The movie has some hilarious moments, great visuals and incredible voice talents. It's a movie the whole family will enjoy.

*Hotel Transylvania* confronts the concept of fearing those who are different. Humans are afraid of monsters, and the monsters are afraid of humans. They base their fears on assumptions made about each other. While this is a good message for children, it depicts monsters as misunderstood. In other words, it presents the villains as the victims.

With Halloween approaching, it's no surprise to see children's movies featuring vampires and mummies, but it's up to parents to discern whether this content is appropriate for their children.

While *Hotel Transylvania* is an enjoyable movie with an

ultimately positive (though somewhat romantic) message, the soft-horror theme is not one to ignore. Singing and dancing monsters may seem harmless, but introducing the occult to young children may not be a wise choice. Movieguide recommends applying some cautious media wisdom to *Hotel Transylvania*.

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## **'Total Recall': Non-Stop Action, Not Much Depth**

*Total Recall* is a refashioned remake of the 1990 movie starring Arnold Schwarzenegger. The new version is a dystopian vision of a world where most of the world is uninhabitable due to chemical warfare so that only the United Federation of Britain and the Colony, formerly known as Australia, remain. Somehow, the workers in The Colony travel on an elevator called the Fall through the Earth to Britain and back, each trip taking only a few minutes.

Douglas Quaid (Colin Farrell) is troubled by nightmares of being attacked by robots and men in plastic armor while an attractive woman tries to rescue him. His beautiful wife (Kate Beckinsale) wakes him up and wants to comfort him. She finds out on TV that terrorists have attacked the subway, so she has to leave too soon to work on securing the disaster site. Quaid's wife, Lori, is an officer in the United Federation. She must investigate the bombing.

Meanwhile, Quaid takes the Fall with his best friend to work in a robot soldier manufacturing plant in the United Federation of Britain. Quaid thinks about overcoming his nightmare by going to Total Rekall [sic], which advertises

that it gives you new memories.

That night he comes home to find his wife asleep, so he goes to Total Recall. Total Recall is located in a seedy area of the colony where a weird motley group of drug dealers and prostitutes hang out. They offer him many types of memories: adventures, love, fame, fortune, etc. He chooses being a spy.

In the middle of being injected by the false memory serum, troops show up and shoot up Total Recall. Miraculously, Quaid has the ability to shoot up the troops and escape, now being chased by his wife, who turns out to be a secret agent, not his wife.

**[Spoiler Alert!]** Anyway, whether he's really living the Total Recall life or a real life, Quaid discovers that he is probably an agent called Hauser who is supposed to be working for the revolution headed up by a recluse named Matthias, but Quaid is really a double agent working for the Chancellor. Further, he finds that he has a beautiful love interest trying to save him named Melina (Jessica Biel). Also, he discovers that the government is creating chaos by staging the terrorist acts, so they have an excuse to invade The Colony and kill the people so they can repopulate with the overflow from the overpopulated Britain.

Nothing, however, is as it appears to be. In the midst of this confusion about what is real and what isn't real, there's a tremendous amount of killing, brutality and deception.

*Total Recall* is full of action. Young people who like action will get caught up in it. The movie emphasizes the individual against the state. It also poses the question: What is real? Several lines ask whether there is an objective reality. Regrettably, there are many plot holes in the movie and many unanswered questions. The characters, except for Quaid, are very thinly developed.

In a normal review, it could be said *Total Recall* is action

without much of a plot. But since the movie is dealing with the nature of reality, maybe the plot holes, disjointed storyline and shallow characters are meant to hint that what's happening is just a dream. After all, dreams are never neatly logical, and some scholars have compared movies to a public dream.

There's a surplus of gratuitous foul language in this *Total Recall* remake. There's also the obligatory scene, based on the first total recall, with the three-breasted prostitute, who exposes herself. The movie also contains drug use, radical libertarian individualism, many killings, implausible plot points and sexual situations. However, surprisingly, none of these cross the line into the excessively bad area of Movieguide ratings.

In the final analysis, extreme caution is required for the new *Total Recall*, especially for susceptible youth who could get caught up in the PG-13 movie's violence and the reality-bending story. In all, *Total Recall* is a B movie without much to offer moviegoers. There are better movies out there this summer and on home video.

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## **D'Souza's Documentary Explores History of Obama's Roots**

*2016: Obama's America* is a documentary made by Ivy League Dartmouth graduate and conservative Christian pundit Dinesh D'Souza. It explores the historical and political background of President Barack Obama.

D'Souza is known as a Christian apologist, conservative pundit and scholar. The documentary is based on his books *Obama's America* and *The Roots of Obama's Rage*. In the books and the movie, he criticizes Obama's roots and background. He reveals Obama's historical background with his family and his involvement in politics before he became president of the United States.

The documentary starts off by explaining D'Souza's background and showing similar upbringings to Obama's. D'Souza points out that Obama's campaigns as president have been heavily reliant on the race issue in America, and Obama knew he could play that card. The documentary explores the historical and family background of Barack. For example, D'Souza delves into the history of Obama's Kenyan father and his role in his son's life.

President Obama's father was abusive and neglectful. He married multiple times and had multiple children with each of them. President Obama was born under Barack Senior's second wife, Stanley Ann Dunham. After Obama's father left them, Dunham and young Obama moved to Jakarta, Indonesia, and began anew. D'Souza continues to explore Obama's early family history and meets his half-brother, George Obama. George has very contradictory views with the rest of his family. Unlike them, George is pro-colonialist rather than anti-colonialist.

D'Souza then moves on to Obama facing his father's "ghost" and exploring the political values animating his father's life. According to D'Souza, this began to swell a hatred of America in young Obama.

D'Souza then explores Obama's "founding fathers," as in the leading mentors throughout his life. These people include Frank Marshall Davis (a radical communist in Hawaii), Bill Ayers (the infamous communist anti-American terrorist), Edward Said (a strong anti-colonialist and anti-zionist), Roberto Unger (a Brazilian socialist), and the Rev. Jeremiah Wright (a

leading pastor and theologian in Black Liberation Theology, a Marxist interpretation of the Bible). Obama has close ties with all these men. They have influenced his worldview as well as his view of capitalism and American values.

As a half-black and half-white American, Obama knew he had a power over many Americans in his election. D'Souza explains the tricks that Obama used in his presidential election and his advantage over many candidates because of the historical civil rights accomplishment of being the first "black president."

D'Souza also shows the audience the tactics and facts of how Obama is destroying America from within. He's doing this by increasing the nation's debt, reducing its nuclear arms, barring oil drilling and tapping into America's natural resources through the EPA and other methods, and a poor foreign policy often favoring other countries. Thus, the movie also tries to answer the question, "If Obama wins a second term, where will we be in 2016?"

The cinematic quality of *2016: Obama's America* is very high. Many interesting shots show the poverty and political turmoil around the world. They help make the interviews fun to watch. At times, the movie seems jumpy from one story to the next, but a lot of information was covered because of that. The movie is more or less a companion to D'Souza's two books.

D'Souza used statistics and interviews to show the research he had done on Obama's history. While there are some minor questionable elements, such as brief rioting footage from the Middle East that includes the burning of an American flag, and a few references to Obama's neglectful and abusive father, *2016: Obama's America* has a very strong moral, patriotic worldview supporting American values, including the values of economic liberty and free market capitalism. It also has a very strong anti-socialist worldview.

Socialists and Neo-Marxist/Leninist radicals like President Obama, his father and his mentors helped create and foment the anti-colonialist fervor that shook developing continents like Africa, Latin America and Asia. However, their radical politics have left many countries in those areas ravaged by tyrannical totalitarian governments full of national and international socialist despots. Just compare countries like North Korea, Zimbabwe and Cuba with countries like post-war Germany, post-war Japan and South Korea that adopted American, capitalist values rather than the tyrannical utopian ideals of the radical anti-capitalist left. The difference is stark but enlightening.

*2016: Obama's America* is a documentary that everyone should watch. The content is that important, even though the structure could have been improved.

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