

‘Despicable Me 2’: Endearing and Likable

An unexpected animated hit in 2010, *Despicable Me* grossed more than \$540 million and becoming the 10th-biggest toon film in history. So it was a no-brainer for Universal Pictures and Illumination Entertainment to come up with a sequel for the worldwide blockbuster this summer, touting it as “more minion madness.”

Charming, unique and family friendly, *Despicable Me* saw would-be villain Gru’s heart filled by three adorable orphan girls. In *Despicable Me 2*, the tagline is “When the world needed a hero, they called a villain.”

The follow-up finds Gru (voiced by Steve Carell) converted from stealing the moon to goodness and suburban life. As a doting father, he has repurposed his plethora of scary inventions in order to keep his three adopted daughters entertained.

Meanwhile, Gru’s gibberish-spouting, goggle-wearing yellow minions are plugging away as wannabe babysitters and busy developing a line of their master’s delicious jellies and jams. Dr. Nefario (Russell Brand) returns as Gru’s assistant, but it’s clear he misses doing villainous acts, so that becomes a plot twist.

Kristen Wiig, who voiced Miss Hattie in the first movie, returns but in a different role, as secret agent Lucy Wilde. Gru’s love interest and ideal mother for the sisters Margo (Miranda Cosgrove), Edith (Dana Gaier) and Agnes (Elsie Kate Fisher), Lucy represents a secretive organization called the Anti-Villain League, which seeks to recruit Gru.

“Yes, I have been recruited by a top-secret agency to go undercover and save the world,” Gru tells his girls.

Edith asks, “You’re gonna be a spy?”

Gru, who had reluctantly agreed to help, replies, "That's right, baby! Gru's back in the game with gadgets and weapons and cool cars!"

Gru must set up an undercover operation in a mall cupcake shop while tracking El Macho (Benjamin Bratt), a former villain whom fatherhood has forced into semi-retirement, and while managing a Mexican restaurant at the mall.

Gru must save the world by keeping the so-called PX41 serum, which can turn innocent creatures into indestructible monsters, from falling into the wrong hands.

Along the way, homage is paid to *Despicable Me*, including the super slow-mo avoiding-missiles scenes and another large great white shark.

Despicable Me 2 is far from a faith-based animated toon, but this comedy features wholesome and positive messages about the goodness of adoption, parenting, marriage and being a family. The family-friendly animated film, though, could have used less potty humor.

Too bad there isn't another sweet prayer scene like in *Despicable Me*. Here's hoping that there will be one in the minions' feature, which is in the works. Don't miss *Despicable Me 2*'s end-credits "audition" sequence.

Content Watch: Just like its predecessor, *Despicable Me 2* is rated PG for rude humor and mild action. There is some slight potty humor and fart gags, and some minions are shown as androgynous cross-dressing jokesters with naked backsides. In terms of violence, the mutation-spawning PX41 serum turns people and creatures into ferocious monsters, which could be scary for kids 5 and under. The minions also turn purple and snarl and bark threateningly. A human is transformed into an enormous and extremely dangerous-looking monster with wild hair and huge teeth. Other scenes of violence have a strong element of slapstick, such as when the hero is struck by a car. He is not injured, and the scene is very much played for

comic effect.