

'Journey 2' offers exhilarating thrill ride

by Alan Mowbray



The follow-up to the 2008 hit, *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, *Journey 2: The Mysterious Island* copies the same “what if?” scenario of the original: Is it possible that Jules Verne’s books weren’t just concoctions of the author’s imagination, but a chronicle of his scientific discoveries?

In the sequel, Sean Anderson (Josh Hutcherson) discovers a coded distress signal from his grandfather Alexander (Michael Caine), which only a true Vernean—people who believe that Jules Verne was writing nonfiction—could decipher.

The message leads Sean and his new stepfather Hank (Dwayne Johnson, taking over for Brendan Fraser, who played Sean’s uncle in the original) to a mysterious island located where none should exist. With the help of rogue helicopter pilot Gabato (Luis Guzman) and his mechanic daughter Khailani (Vanessa Hudgens), Sean and Hank set out to find the island and rescue Alexander before it’s too late.

If you’re looking for a movie that you and your kids can enjoy, *Journey 2* fits the bill. It’s full of the gags, jokes, oddities, visual twists and other ingredients that kids love. Although it has a bit of a predictable storyline, the CGI and associated imagination that went into its creation is enough to satisfy a grown-up as well. To put it another way, *Journey 2* is a fun, enjoyable movie, but you won’t be discussing its literary qualities when the credits are rolling.

The movie offers some teachable moments. Sean’s father died when he was young, and his mother has remarried. Hank is the outsider here, and it’s frustrating for him because Sean doesn’t really want to do anything with him. Admirably, Hank

has a long-term, nurturing father-style; he is just waiting for the right opportunity to connect with his “new” teen son. Hank’s patience and understanding in love is evident.

Sean is a bit spoiled. There were times when I paused the movie and asked my 11-year-old son whether Sean’s thinking was correct or not and why. I’m so proud of him that he answered correctly every time! Even when you think they’re not listening...

There is also a moment where Sean must stop looking out for No. 1, and instead, make the choice to endanger himself to save another person on the island. Additionally, there is semi-biblical parallel of Gabato faced with a decision between material riches (at his peril) and the inherent wealth of family.

My wife and I laughed as much as our kids did. *Journey 2* is the kind of flick that will leave you feeling happy and exhilarated at the end. Pop some popcorn. Enjoy.

The DVD features a gag reel and deleted scenes not included in the theatrical release. *Journey 2* made \$102 million in the domestic box office, which is a modest amount given its \$80 million budget, according to . But it was a huge hit internationally bringing in \$222 million (\$324 million total), so it’s no surprise that *Journey 3* is already in the works.

Content Watch: *Journey 2: The Mysterious Island* is rated PG for some adventure action and very mild language. The teen girl Kailani gives Sean an innocent kiss. Kailani, though, wears a figure-fitting shorts, and a midriff-baring and cleavage-revealing tank top. Our almost 5-year-old daughter sat on the couch between my wife and I, and there were a couple instances when she was reaching for one of us during the more intense scenes.

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