

'Legend of the Guardians' is worth a hoot

✖ Considering how ultraviolent *300* and *Watchmen* were, I was a little tentative to watch director Zack Snyder's first fully animated film—*Legend of the Guardians: The Guardians of Ga'Hoole*, now available on DVD.

Based on the first three books of the popular children's series by author Kathryn Lasky, Snyder's fantasy film has been described by several movie reviewers as *Lord of the Rings* with owls.

The film tells the story of Soren (Jim Sturgess), a young owl who grew up listening to—and loving—his father's stories about the Guardians of Ga'Hoole—a mythic band of winged warriors who once fought a great battle to rescue all of owlkind from the evil Pure Ones. Meanwhile, his older brother, Kludd (Ryan Kwanten), rejects the stories of heroism and good, but is actually drawn to the Pure Ones.

When Soren and Kludd—who vie for their father's favor like the biblical brothers Jacob and Esau—fall into the talons of the Pure Ones, it is up to Soren to make a daring escape with the help of other brave owls and seek out the Great Tree, home of the Guardians. It is only with their help does Soren stand any chance of defeating the Pure Ones and saving the owlkind.

With such an adventure premise, the CGI film gives the feel of real owls soaring through the air—much like dragons taking to the sky in *How to Train Your Dragon*. After watching *Legend of the Guardians* on DVD with my three young boys, we found it to be entertaining as the owl's colorful and detailed faces resembled human emotions, and the movie packed plenty of action.

Snyder, who worked with the animation team behind *Happy Feet*, filmed the owl's battle scenes at high speeds, while contrasting it with slow motion. Although not a faith-based film, *Legend of the Guardians* explored themes such as good vs. evil, friendship, family and spirituality.

Echoing several biblical passages, the Guardians have sworn an oath to "mend the broken, make strong the weak and vanquish evil." Additionally, Soren is encouraged to use his gizzard, much like "use the force" in the Star Wars movies, enabling owls to delve into a deeper, spiritual reality.

Legend of the Guardians has a dark feel to it as the Pure Ones leaders Metalbeak (Joel Edgerton) and his queen, Nyra (Helen Mirren), are quite vindictive and scary-looking. Rated PG for some sequences of scary action, some of the battle scenes may be too intense for young children. I was particularly glad that my 4-year-old, Chase, fell asleep one-fourth into the film.

But Andrew, 7, understood the movie's message: "It was cool

because good defeated evil.” His 9-year-old brother, Alex, added: “We should never give into revenge.”

Though far from being a perfect family film, *Legend of the Guardians* is worth a hoot for Christians who want to engage in spiritual discussion about an owl movie.

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