

'Night at the Museum' Comes to Life in Fun Final Installment

History amusingly repeats itself in *Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb*, the third and supposed final installment of the wax-statues-comes-to-life movie franchise.

Despite not endearing themselves to highbrow critics, *Night at the Museum* (2006) and *Night At The Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian* (2009) made \$987 million worldwide. Loosely adapted from Croatian author Milan Trenc's 1993 children's book, the popular series has been described by one film critic as located halfway between *Ghostbusters* and *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*.

Secret of the Tomb opens with an Indiana Jones-style flashback set in 1938, which tells the back story of the golden Tablet of Akmenrah—a magical artifact from Egypt that can somehow bring statues and figurines to life every night with its unexplained powers.

The action shifts to present day, where recently-promoted director of nighttime operations Larry Daley (Ben Stiller) finds out that the life-like exhibits at New York's famous American Museum of Natural History have developed a concerning glitch.

Pinpointing the cause to Ahkmenrah's (Rami Malek) rapidly corroding tablet, Daley travels to the British Museum in London to confer with Ahkmenrah's dad Merenkahre (Ben Kingsley). During the pilgrimage, the single dad is accompanied by his son Nicky (Skyler Gisondo), Dexter the monkey, Attila the Hun (Patrick Gallagher), Lilliputian-sized cowboy Jedediah (Owen Wilson), Roman general Octavius (Steve Coogan) and Teddy Roosevelt (Robin Williams).

A new museum means new characters, including *Downton Abbey* alum Dan Stevens as a vainglorious Sir Lancelot and Rebel Wilson as Tilly, the British Museum's precocious night guard.

While caveman Laa (also played by Ben Stiller) blocks the security guard's door, Tilly says: "You better let me out! What are you staring at? What, have you never seen a gorgeous woman before, who could be a model if she didn't love pizza so much."

Besides the Elgin Marbles and other artifacts coming alive at the British Museum, *Secret of the Tomb* features nifty visual gags, including a three-way battle set inside M.C. Escher's physics-defying lithograph "Relativity"—which pays homage to the delirious museum chase from Joe Dante's "Looney Tunes: Back in Action."

Shawn Levy, who directed the three *Night at the Museum* films, keeps the action moving briskly during the London scenes. Convinced that the tablet is actually his coveted Holy Grail, Lancelot departs into the night and onto the stage of a West End revival of Lerner and Loewe's *Camelot*—which entails a very funny cameo from a Marvel super hero.

Near the film's end, there's an unexpected poignant moment when Williams says his final farewell as Roosevelt before turning back to wax. The iconic comedian and actor died in August and the film was dedicated to him and Mickey Rooney, who also passed earlier this year.

For the most part, *Secret of the Tomb* is family friendly and entertaining, while offering a lesson about children becoming adults and making the choices for their own future. Parents and their kids should enjoy visiting this museum one last time.

Content Watch: Rated PG for mild action, some rude humor and brief language, *Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb* is

tame compared to other films in its genre, but it does feature some questionable content for *Christian* parents. The worst is Dexter the monkey urinating on a fire, drenching Jed and Octavius in the stream. Perhaps echoing the sentiment of moviegoers, Octavius replies: "We must never speak of what happened here today." Also, Merenkahre, who descended from the Sun God Ra, had the magical tablet created in the temple of the Moon God Thoth to unite his family throughout eternity. After learning of Daley's Jewish background, Merenkahre retorts: "I love Jews! We had 40,000 of them as slaves." Small children may also be scared by a gigantic metallic snake-demon and there's implied alcohol consumption at a party by young adults.

Eric Tiansay *is news editor of Christian Retailing, a Charisma Media publication.*