

View our mobile site (<http://m.stalbertgazette.com>)

St. Albert Gazette

Fuzzy little teddy makes splendid return

By: Scott Hayes

| Posted: Saturday, Jul 23, 2011 06:00 am



A lost tail and a misunderstood note lead Winnie the Pooh and the entire gang on a series of adventures in the latest offering of the teddy all stuffed with fluff.

Supplied image

Winnie the Pooh

Stars: 4

Starring the voices of: John Cleese, Jim Cummings, Bud Luckey, Craig Ferguson, Jack Boulter, Travis Oates, Kristen Anderson-Lopez, Wyatt Dean Hall, Tom Kenny and Huell Howser

Directed by: Stephen J. Anderson and Don Hall

Rated: G

Now playing at: Cineplex Odeon North Edmonton and Scotiabank Theatre

There's a lot to be said for the quaint and wonderful world of Disney, of *Winnie the Pooh*, and the antiquated but thoroughly nostalgic realm of traditional animation. Perhaps all three are now lost to the ages but that doesn't diminish their value or their sense of what is important in childhood.

Frankly, it all starts when that castle first appears at the start of any show with its flags swaying and fireworks set off against a starry backdrop. I am immediately transported to the time of my youth. I remember being five and watching a Disney show at 6 p.m. on a Sunday, or when my elementary school would have a special Easter party and *Robin Hood* would be played on an old projector in the gymnasium. My feet fell asleep from being cross-legged for so long but I revelled in every second of it, the memory indelibly imprinted on my brain. This movie is probably the last grab at the straw for the House of Mouse to salvage the careers of cartoonists who actually use pens and brushes. What a beautiful swan song, if indeed that's what it is, but I sure hope not.

The stories might be more simplistic but that's the genius. It's very difficult to cloud the purity of something so beautiful. To be truly truthful, this story is more compelling and timeless than any *Harry Potter* or *Transformers* soap opera.

It starts off with poor Eeyore (drawn by former St. Albert resident Brian Ferguson) not knowing where his tail has gone. As Pooh, Tigger and all the gang help him come up with a suitable substitute, they soon find themselves wondering where Christopher Robin has gone. A mistranslated note makes them think a monster called a Backson has taken him away. It goes on from there as a story of misadventures. It is nothing but pure fun.

I'm a big fan of voice actors in general and the ones here are not only superlative talents but they are also at the tops of their games. Jim Cummings does a very fine job of portraying both Pooh and Tigger and it is reminiscent of classic Disney characters of the past like Peter Ustinov's Prince John from *Robin Hood* or Phil Harris's Baloo from *The Jungle Book*. Bud Luckey is my favourite, however, as the voice of Eeyore.

I love these kinds of stories that break through the fifth wall when the characters are portrayed as being inside a book. They interact with the words and the narrator even shakes the page from time to time to wake Pooh so that he can get on the very important thing that he has to do.

It's also noteworthy that this full feature length children's movie clocks in at just over a single hour. That fact proves that tight writing and editing can actually improve a children's show.
