

Shrek Forever After

A Review by Tom Sims

I had the chance to see “Shrek Forever After” (fourth installment in the “Shrek” series) at the Tribeca Film Festival where it had its premiere more than a month ago—but I didn’t take it. I read the synopsis and thought, “Forget it.” The first Shrek was excellent—albeit especially for the kids. The soundtrack from the first film still ranks among my absolute favorites (you might even say it’s one of those films where I actually liked the soundtrack more). The second Shrek was so bad in my estimation that I barely even considered seeing the third. So when the fourth came out, I was already not compelled to see it. When I heard the premise is lifted from “It’s a Wonderful Life,” I was almost repelled.

Okay, but I’ve been hearing some good reports about the film, especially in essentially kicking the daylight out of “Sex and the City 2” at the box office, and I thought, “Maybe it’s not that bad. And frankly, it wasn’t all that bad. I’m putting my reputation on the line here, so let me be clear. If you’ve never seen a Shrek film, of course you’re not going to see this one as well. If you liked only the first Shrek film, you will be disappointed with this one but you won’t hate it like the past immediate two blunders. If you loved those two blunders, this is your cue to stop reading this column (at least when I’m writing).

Yeah, Donkey (Eddie Murphy) is still not as funny as he was in the first movie, and the supporting characters are sort of a blur here as well. The storyline is lifted—no doubt, but it’s done so with some originality. Shrek (Mike Myers), burdened by his new family and extenuating obligations from princess-turned-ogre Fiona (Cameron Diaz), wishes for a simpler life when he was a “real” ogre, the one that villagers would hunt down with pitchforks. He gets his wish by dealing with the conniving Rumpelstiltskin (Walter Dohrn—of SpongeBob SquarePants fame).

And it’s not like this storyline hasn’t been attempted in recent history as well. Consider “Santa Clause 3,” where Santa (Tim Allen) wishes for the same and there the conniving Jack Frost (Martin Short) takes over the North Pole in a surreal alternative world. But that movie failed miserably. “Shrek Forever After” manages to pull something together with this overused storyline. Not sure I would spend extra to see it in IMAX (still can’t believe it’s playing in IMax), but certainly has enough color and action to see on the big screen.

Okay. There’s a half-decent review for supposedly the last in a series that really shouldn’t have been. Can we retire Shrek now?