

Movie Review: ‘Incredibles 2’

NEW YORK — The first family of superheroes returns in “Incredibles 2” (Disney), the highly anticipated sequel to a much-loved 2004 animated film.

Alas, the passage of time (a truly incredible 14 years) has not been kind. Despite Brad Bird’s return as writer and director, “Incredibles 2” lacks the spontaneity, charm and style of its precursor (as well as the leading article from “The Incredibles”).

Story takes a back seat to a visually impressive but relentless barrage of (often repetitive) action and violence, even gunplay, which may frighten younger viewers. Added to the mix is some profane and crass language which is jarring in any children’s movie.

It’s a pity, as amid all the bluster “Incredibles 2” pitches the worthy lessons of its predecessor about love, family, courage and helping others in need.

“Incredibles 2” picks right up where the last film left off. The Parr family — parents Bob (voice of Craig T. Nelson) and Helen (voice of Holly Hunter), and kids Violet (voice of Sarah Vowell), Dash (voice of Huck Milner), and baby Jack-Jack (voice of Eli Fucile) — have just used their assorted superhuman abilities to vanquish the forces of evil.

But their victory is short-lived; the law still dictates that “supers” must remain undercover and inactive. So the Parrs reluctantly return to their humdrum existence, and Helen and Bob wonder how they will make ends meet.

Enter a champion, Winston Deavor (voice of Bob Odenkirk), a media mogul and superhero fan who wants to rehabilitate the supers and remind society of their importance. Joined by his inventor sister Evelyn (voice of Catherine Keener), Deavor wants Helen — aka Elastigirl — in the spotlight, showcasing her powers in the fight of good versus evil.

That means parental roles are reversed, and Bob must now stay home to care for the kids, while Helen gets to save the day and dominate the headlines. It’s a big change

for “Mr. Incredible” as he navigates “new math” homework with Dash, comforts Violet amid her boyfriend troubles, and discovers that Jack-Jack, despite being in diapers, is full of (super) surprises.

Needless to say, the opportunity arises to introduce a gaggle of new supers into the mix (toy manufacturers will rejoice) and offer cameos of old chestnuts like Frozone (voice of Samuel L. Jackson) and fashion designer Edna Mode (voice of Brad Bird). And before you can say “Great Caesar’s ghost!” (sorry, wrong cartoon), the Parr family will reunite to save the world, again.

Preceding “Incredibles 2” is a short animated film called “Bao,” directed by Domee Shi. It’s a bizarre story of a Chinese mother who adopts the eponymous dumpling that has sprung to life. The end result is more squeamish than tasty.

The film contains action violence and gunplay and mild profane and crass language. The Catholic News Service classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested. Some material may not be suitable for children.

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