

Original Cocoon better

Cocoon: The Return ★★ 1/2
Cineplex Odeon Westmount

review by Paul Sparrow-Clarke

As you are probably aware, movie sequels rarely measure up to the standards of the original. I can think of only a handful that do: *Aliens*, *The Road Warrior* and *The Empire Strikes Back* spring to mind. Roger Ebert, the popular American film critic, once defined a sequel as "a filmed deal." Sequels often fail because they have large obstacles to overcome, notably the familiarity the audience has with the situation onscreen, and the fact that anyone who watches them is constantly making comparisons with the original. You expect certain things the second time around, and yet at the same time you would like to see something a little different. It must be creatively very hard to come up with a sequel that overcomes these obstacles.

The question I am leading up to here, and the question you probably want answered, is "does *Cocoon: The Return* succeed? Is it as good as the original?" Well, in some ways yes, but about thirty minutes into the movie I was wondering when the filmmakers were going to do something original, and they never quite did. The closest the film comes to adding something to the original story is when the old folks who left for Antarea, and now return to Earth, discover that they have missed their home planet and begin to examine their decision to leave Earth forever. Before their ship returns, each of them must decide whether to leave Earth again and enjoy immortality, but be far away from the people and experiences

they have spent all their life with, or to stay, which means they will grow older and die like the rest of us. A neat little dilemma which the movie sets up perfectly, but doesn't settle quite satisfactorily, though it tries very hard and almost pulls it off.

This dilemma that they must confront is the most interesting part of the screenplay, which otherwise contains some pretty standard stuff. The story concerns a rescue mission launched by the Antareans to take back home the last remaining cocoons from the ocean bed. Don Ameche, Wilford Brimley, Hume Cronyn, Maureen Stapleton, Jessica Tandy and Gwen Verdon all return from the first movie as the old folks from the seniors' home who left for Antara, and who now return to aid the mission. Also back from the first film are Tahnee Welch as the foxy Antarean, Brian Dennehy in a very small role as the leader of the aliens, and Steve Guttenberg, whose character I found irritating in both movies. The Antareans recover the cocoons, whilst the humans reacquaint themselves with Earth.

The screenplay has its moments, when it isn't simply being a replay of *Cocoon*, or trotting out the tired old subplot of scientists capturing one of the aliens from a cocoon, and the nasty old government wanting to study it for goodness-knows-what nefarious purposes (the screenwriters probably had to blow the dust off that one). The ending, especially the very last scene with Guttenberg, you can see coming a mile away, but there are a few emotional scenes that really work, in addition to some that will make you laugh.

The main thing that saves this film is the excellent cast. All the original actors



Don Ameche, Hume Cronyn and Wilford Brimley contemplate the choice between immortality and death.

return, and it is frequently great fun to watch them at work. So much fun, in fact, that you can sometimes forgive the weaknesses of the script (Don Ameche won an Oscar for his role in *Cocoon*). The direction by Daniel Petrie, who also directed *The Bay Boy*, is competent, and the visual effects by George Lucas' Industrial Light and Magic are as good as ever.

Overall, then, *Cocoon: The Return*, like

so many sequels, presents a rather mixed bag. There are many individual elements in the film that are praiseworthy, but it is a shame that they did not add up to more. A better script was needed to really make the movie work; also missing was the sure hand of director Ron Howard. *Cocoon: The Return* is a diverting two hours of entertainment; just don't expect anything too outstanding or original.

Great Expectations

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his affection for Estelle, Miss Havisham's charge, which he is unable to forsake although he realizes that it is doomed.

If Pip seems unbelievably naive in many ways to us, it is a reflection of the changes the last 150 or so years since *Great Expectations* was written have brought. We sympathize with him, although not as

strongly as we might like to; perhaps because of the flaws in his character and the fact that he has not really earned his status as a gentleman.

Great Expectations is billed as family entertainment, although the density of its narrative and the complexity of its plot make it more suitable for adult audiences, despite the several child actors required by the script. The Citadel production exposes the play's weaknesses, but balances out with a strong set of characterizations.

R.A.T.T.						
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