

JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH

USA | 2008 | 93' | Action, Adventure, Family | Rated PG

Directed by

Eric Brevig

Written by

Michael D. Weiss

Jennifer Flackett

Mark Levin

Jules Verne

(from the novel by)

With

Brendan Fraser

Josh Hutcherson

Anita Briem

Original Music by

Andrew Lockington



Première:

Same Planet. Different World.

World release:

Budget: \$60.000.000

10/07/2008

Gross: \$241.995.151

REVIEW

The scientist Trevor Anderson, a vulcanologist, is fighting not to lose his position as a teacher and researcher in an American school. When his 13-year-old nephew, Sean, comes to stay with him for some days during his mother's arrangements as they're moving to Canada, Trevor receives from Sean's mother a box with some stuff that belonged to her husband (and Trevor's brother), Max, who had gone missing years before during some research expedition in Iceland. In the box, Trevor finds a copy of Jules Verne's "A Journey to the Centre of the Earth", where lots of notes are written throughout the book. When Sean sees a strange spot on his uncle's computer, reporting strange vulcan activity in Iceland, they both travel there to find out possible clues about Max's mysterious disappearance. Guided by Hannah, a mountain guide daughter of a former colleague of Max's, they get trapped in an old mine because of a landslip, from where the only way is down, and where they'll find out that their relatives' fantasies could not be so impossible.

This movie comes from an idea of adapting old books and stories to our time, an idea which is increasing in popularity and success but which many fans of famous writers cannot stand. Granted that every movie must be seen before being judged, this first movie of a hypothetical series relied all of his promoting campaign on the 3D version, which still was, in 2008, something of a novelty but that could yet anticipate on the quality of the whole product (we all know what this kind of movies usually fall on). The fact that its director, Eric Brevig, has worked in this position only for one episode of the TV series "Xena", though, could be misleading: he actually works for the film industry as a visual effects supervisor or assistant, he has been twice nominated to an Oscar in this category and he won a Special Achievement Academy Award for his and his team's work in "Total Recall". So the choice to give him the keys of a spectacular movie as this one was a choice that, in the end, turned out to be quite right. The drawback is that, in the screenplay above all, some (not crucial) points are left behind, which gives an impression of a B-movie when the product itself is, in my opinion, a good one in his genre.

The director does indeed a good job, as I said, and the long shots are very well conceived while the close-ups are, sometimes, a bit overdone; the choice between the different shots is, however, well-balanced and smart, with a very close attention to the characters' actions and feelings. What undermines this movie, as I said, are a couple of screenplay mistakes. After all of these movies with difficult teenagers living with some relatives with whom they get on well only after days and weeks of trying, it is hard to accept how Sean's behavior towards his uncle changes in a blink of an eye. And don't try to justify this change with the feelings for his father, because it is clear that, before the sudden change, he was resigned to not learning the truth about him. And the other thing is: if when they arrive (SPOILER, not so big though) to the Centre of the Earth the temperature is about 85° degrees, shouldn't they sweat a little more? Not one single drop, never. I found that strange, but maybe it's only my point of view.

Now, as for the actors. Brendan Fraser (Trevor) is well known for his scarcity of 'serious' roles and instead he is famous for his Richard O'Connell in "The Mummy" trilogy and other 'entertaining' movies with no serious intent. He deserves some good words for this movie, as his career will surely not change direction, but he is reliable enough when it comes to his genre of movies. Not one of the greatest actors, but surely one who acts for the pleasure to do so and not only to be covered with the billions of some other colleagues. Different, but only as she's far younger, is the situation of Anita Briem (Hannah); apart from the very interesting fact that she's Icelandic for real, she plays her role in a very similar way to Fraser's, so that the acting level of the movie is quite homogeneous, something that actually the movie benefits from on the whole. After her appearance in "The Tudors" TV series, I think that she's much more qualified for that kind of acting, where the quality is important but the quantity is more. The presence of Josh Hutcherson, given the results achieved by this talented young actor, is the ace in the pack of the movie. He began his career very young and, for the time being, his success is strictly related to the "Hunger Games" trilogy, which is going well and is opening up a great future for him. In this movie, he really seems a very mature early-teenager and he's totally unaffected by his solo scenes, where instead he shows his great still-to-be-developed skills.

The almost unknown Andrew Lockington signs the music for this epic journey. This very young Canadian composer has already a quite long curriculum, with both movies and TV series. His work is basically accurate in every moment, even if some emotional climaxes are almost exaggerated by his tracks. Not bad if only because in line with the whole movie.

Overall, a good movie. Of course, nothing that Verne's fans could consider appropriate, but I think that this kind of movies, which are only inspired by these famous books, are to be considered on their own. Unless one wants to bury them for good.

ASSESSMENT	
POSTER	79%
TAGLINE	65%
TRAILER	70%
SATISFACTION	69%
DIRECTING	75%
SCREENPLAY	70%
PRODUCTION DESIGN	77%
CINEMATOGRAPHY	79%
CAST	75%
MUSIC	75%
TOTAL	74% - C