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Abominable: A musical DreamWorks tour through China



by Victoria Davis 1 month ago

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*DreamWorks magically spotlights the flourishing China countryside in their latest music-infused, but typically adorable, children's film **Abominable**.*

Leave it to DreamWorks to once again make folk legend's most terrifying monsters into the most darling, cute-as-a-button characters you've ever seen. **Abominable** is the animation studio's latest addition to their plethora of family-focused films—**How to Train Your Dragon**, **Trolls**, **Kung Fu Panda**—and the starring "monster," Everest, is big, blue-eyed and beautiful. On top of that, **Abominable** is a music-centered feature, taking viewers on a tour through China's most scenic countryside.

But does the film, directed by Todd Wilderman with *Monsters, Inc.*'s and *Open Season*'s Jill Culton, share too much of a likeness to its kid-meets-monster counterparts, **How To Train Your Dragon** and even *Monsters Inc.*?

Abominable takes place first in a dark, concrete lab. As a curly-haired Dr. Zara (voiced by Sarah Paulson) raves on the phone about the scientific discovery that is their large, furry Yeti, the creature escapes its enclosure and rampages through the facility until it makes a daring escape out of the lab gates and into China's metropolis. The Yeti makes a temporary home on a local apartment rooftop, captivated by the "Visit Everest" billboard right next door.

That apartment belongs to teenage girl, Yi (voiced by Chloe Bennet) and her family—Nai Nai and mom. The building is also home to kid Peng (Albert Tsai) and his older, teenage cousin Jin (Tenzing Norgay Trainor), a fairly self-obsessed, long-time "frienemy" of Yi. Desperate to keep busy and avoid mourning the loss of her father, Yi is constantly making an effort to avoid spending time with friends and family. This is what leads her to play violin alone on the apartment roof, and what leads her to finding the Yeti she aptly names, Everest.

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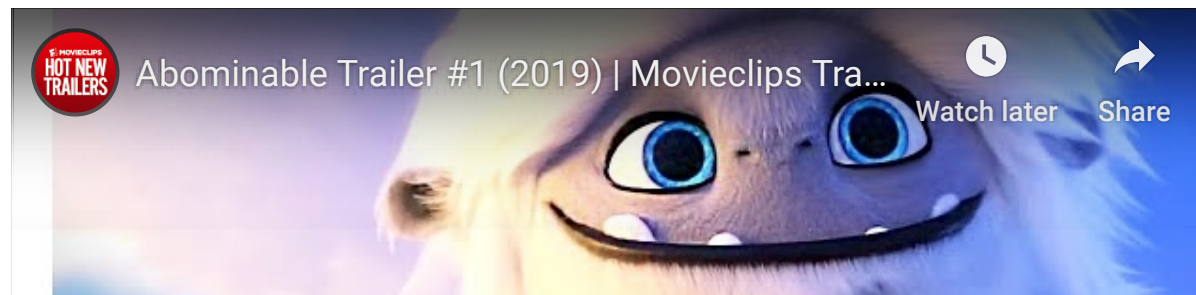
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Admittedly, there is a noticeable Toothless and Hiccup kind of dynamic between Everest and Yi. The girl earns the creatures trust by showing kindness instead of violence and it's eventually revealed that Everest has a very child-like personality, similar to Toothless. Honestly, they even have the same goofy grin. And there's certainly that recognizable monster-out-of-place in a big city that was so prevalent in *Monsters Inc.*

But **while some critics** have called *Abominable's* storyline shallow and lacking in originality, maybe the real question isn't is the film similar to other DreamWorks films, but rather do those similarities make *Abominable* a mediocre film, or are these just the stories DreamWorks does best?



Abominable is DreamWorks' first major cross-cultural, cinematic endeavor with China, save for *Kung Fu Panda*, even including a **Chinese language version** of the film.

The story takes a much more domestic approach, the heart of the film centering around the importance of finding love and security within one's family, rather than relying on lonely self-preservation. While Yi's enthusiasm for helping Everest find his family originally stems from wanting to get away from her own home, Yi learns from Peng and Jin that her family is also searching, searching for ways to make her feel loved.

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The movie's message might seem a little old-as-time, but its execution via the rhythms of music is anything but ordinary. Starting in the city streets of Shanghai and the LED-illuminated towers of Pudong, then traveling to the Gobi Desert and Leshan Giant Buddha in Sichuan, *Kung Fu Panda 3's* production designer Max Boas and VFX supervisor Mark Edwards spared no animation or color giving China's most beautiful sites such fluorescent life. Partner China's scenic routes with Everest's ability to sing nature to live, and suddenly there's a spectacle paralleled to that of *Kubo and the Two Strings*.



Music like Coldplay's strings and choir-heavy *Fix You*, Philip Beaudreau's *Dreams* and Bebe Rexha's *Beautiful Life* swell the emotional vibe in *Abominable*, especially when these powerful beats are accompanied by glowing flowers, dancing trees, and

fields turned to tidal waves. Not to mention the northern lights and lightning show that puts *Brother Bear's* transformation scene to shame.

Abominable's story might share a number of similarities to those of other DreamWorks films, but there's a reason families keep coming back for more. Films like *Abominable*, *How to Train Your Dragon*, *Monster's Inc.*, *Trolls* and *Kung Fu Panda* carry valuable messages and DreamWorks knows how to deliver them in a way that you can't tear your eyes away from the screen. Color and emotional pulls are this animation company's bread and butter and *Abominable* totally nails both.

Plus, there's that good ol' fashioned cheesy humor between Peng's and Everest's horseplay, Jin's complaining about nature and the bad-guy hit squad doing what they do best—royally failing at every operation and breaking out into the occasional Brittany Spears song.



There are others who also view *Abominable* as **another DreamWorks “classic,”** despite schematic from other media outlets. According to **Variety**, the film is expected to “debut in first place,” collecting \$17 million to \$20 million from 4,200 North American theaters this weekend. Should predictions for these estimates prove accurate, *Abominable’s* ticket sales would rank as the “biggest opening weekend this year for an original animated film.”

There’s an **old Chinese proverb** that reads, “Living at a river, one comes to know the nature of the fish therein; Dwelling by a mountain, one learns to recognize the language of the birds thereupon.” Not only does this parallel Yi’s story to Everest about koi fish and their ability to persist against the current as well as their journey to the foot of Mount Everest, but perhaps the proverb could bode well for DreamWorks too. Fans who have lived for stories such as these, and dwelt in the magic of DreamWorks animation, might hopefully recognize the genius language that is *Abominable*.

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Are you planning on seeing *Abominable* this weekend? Do you think the film has a chance at being considered a DreamWorks classic? Leave your thoughts in the comments below!

***Abominable* is in theaters now.**

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