



Media Studies

Film Review - *Robots*

So it's the school holidays and you're watching a movie in a theatre where the average age of the audience is eight and three quarters. Suddenly, almost subliminally, you become aware that the soundtrack – which up to then has included snippets of classics such as the *Tritch Tratch Polka* and *Land of Hope and Glory* – that same soundtrack is carrying the sexy basso of Barry White doing one of his renowned bedroom numbers.

Fortunately the song is not there long enough to begin corrupting the innocent minds of the eight and three quarter year olds – but, if your ears are quick enough to hear it – squeezing in a few notes of this song into a movie designed for kids does bring a little smirk of recognition to the grown-ups in the audience.

And that is, of course, what it's there for, to amuse the grown ups while the kids are enjoying the rest of the movie. It's a common production technique these days – spicing-up a kids movie with a few in-jokes for the grown-ups. It doesn't do any harm and it encourages us adults to think that we're still a jump ahead of the kids.

The movie is *Robots* which is currently screening at many theatres throughout the city and suburbs – including Salisbury. *Robots* is a product of the same animation company which made the very successful *Ice Age*, the all-time favourite of the seven year old viewing companion who accompanied me to see *Robots*. He had already seen *Robots* once before and, according to him, *Robots* is “up there” with *Ice Age*. You can't get a much better recommendation than that.

So, what happens in *Robots*? Well, I'm not going to tell you that. Some movie reviewers would do that – outline the entire plot in great detail to the point where you might wonder why, if you know all about it, you'd want to bother going to see it. That kind of reviewing gives me the screaming abdabs! What I will do is tell you what I think of the movie and whether it's worth you spending your money to go and see it.

Well, in the case of *Robots*, it is first and foremost a movie for kids and, according to my seven year old companion and also his four and a half year old brother – who chortled gleefully all the way through it – even during the scary bits – it has great appeal for its main target audience.

And, for the grown-ups it's OK too. Not just for the tricky, adult recognition bits – like popping in the Tin Man character from *The Wizard of Oz* into a couple of scenes amongst all of the other metal robots. But there are also some worthy elements woven through the plot, such as valuing old things in the face of pressure to discard them in favour of glitzy new things and, ultimately there is a theme which underlies many of the current crop of animated movies – integrity and the triumph of the human spirit (whether the “human” be concealed within the guise of a fish, a lion, an ugly green monster, a squirrel or a metal robot).

Robots is great fun and the kids will love it. Oh, and one last tip for the grown-ups, listen for the voice of Robin Williams who provides the voice for a character called Fender. It's a terrific performance.

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