Honey, I Blew Up the Kid

Directed by Barry Cook.

Starring Rick Moranis, Marcia Strassman, Daniel Shalikar, and Joshua Shalikar.

Off His Rockers

Directed by Randal Kleiser.

Written by Tom Eberhardt, Peter Elbing, and Clifford Sterling.

Starring Daniel and Joshua Shalikar.

Films of director Tsui Hark suffer from disjointed style

As Adam (Daniel and Joshua Shalikar) begins to grow, his older brother (Robert Oliver, left) and father (Rick Moranis, center) are dwarfed by his enormous size in Honey, I Blew Up the Kid.

Stepping tall in the saddle, a young boy takes the reins to his own fantasies and gallops toward adventure in Off His Rockers.

The screenplay for Honey, I Blew Up the Kid, the follow-up to the entertaining 1989 Disney comedy Honey, I Shrunk the Kids, is based on a minor characters.

Rick Moranis

Honey, I Blew Up the Kid

Off His Rockers

Inventive visuals save familiar Honey

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Honey, I Blew Up the Kid, this follow-up to the entertaining 1989 Disney comedy Honey, I Shrunk the Kids is the latest in a long line of sequels to open nationally this summer. Like most of the continuations, Honey, I Blew Up the Kid is guilty of some unenlightened reheating of many of the elements that made the earlier film one of the biggest hits of its year. But there are also enough amusing new developments and amusing visual effects to justify this film overcome its shortcomings. It may not have all of the charm and fun of the original, but Honey, I Blew Up the Kid is a fairly entertaining movie in its own right.

In the time that has passed since inventor Wayne Szalinski (Rick Moranis) accidentally shrunk and then saved his children, and his family have moved to a suburb of Las Vegas, where he is continuing his growth-altering experiments at a prestigious laboratory headed by Clifford Sterling (Lloyd Bridges). His immediate supervisor, Hendrickson (John Shea), is skeptical of his latest machine, an enlargement ray, which has a tendency to burst whatever object it is aimed at. Before long, Szalinski comes to the realization that the enlarging beam is too intense and is jeopardizing the "integrity of the atomic substrate" of its targets. He sneaks into the lab with his sons Nick (Robert Oliver) and Adam (Daniel and Joshua Shalikar) to correct the problem, but, of course, inadvertently says Adam.

All of this, as well as the introduction of an unorthodox subplot dealing with Nick's attraction to a local girl named Mandy (Kerri Russell), occupies the movie's mediocre first act. We see that Wayne and his wife, Diane (Marcia Strassman), are caring parents and how they love all of their children.

All of this is supposed to pay off at the end of the film, when parental instincts prove to be invaluable in resizing the 112-foot Adam, but it never really works. The movie is much better at showing parenting problems than their joys, while as in the first film, the special effects are used for a new metaphor. In Honey, I Shrunk the Kids, the miniature size of the children returning around in the backyard were reminders of how their parents were overlooking them. In the new movie, the field of temporusement of a 2 1/2-year-old takes on catastrophic proportions when he can substitute his dad for his favorite doll.

Fortunately, these mesages never threaten to overshadow the humor or special effects of the story, and once Adam, who doubles as size every time he manages to drain energy from nearby electrical fields, begins to grow, the movie starts to pick up. The visuals early in the film, when a 16-foot Adam chases his family around the house and decides that enlarging furniture is really fun, are excellent. Almost all of the effects in these scenes are flawless, and with some, as when Adam gleefully picks up his father and runs into the next room, I have no idea how they were done. At 28 feet, Adam terrorizes his neighborhood. For 56 feet, he clashes over highway overpasses while forlorn from the military, Sterling Laboratories, and the Szalinski family try to figure out what to do. And by way of 112 feet, it takes downtown Las Vegas to provide an adequate playground for the monstrous toddler in a great-looking conclusion.

While all of the growth effects and visual comedy are solid, the other elements of the movie are more uneven. Szalinski is too amnestic and swayzy for the audience to care about her, and each of the dozens of times that she says, "I wish Dad would leave us alone, no way," I wished that Disney would allow Adam to accidentally step on the foot. And there is also another story line following Hendrickson's attempts to once Wayne from the company and later capture the giant Adam for experimental purposes. But there are a few nice background touches every once in a while, such as signs advertising "colossal shrimp cocktails" and "Big Looser brand ice cream," a shot of Mr. Rogers saying "You're Growing," and a Citizen Kane, plus there is the issue of the taking of randomness. And even the scene play makes some funny sillies to not only the wacky scientists of Disney films of the 1950s such as The Absent-Minded Professor, but any of a number of "vanishviction territory city" films. There is a certain unexplainable joy in noting a close-up of Lloyd Bridges face clenched in terror as he says, "Nothing can stop him now." Moments like this make the film Honey, I Blew Up the Kid while. As they did with Honey, I Shrunk the Kids, Disney has paired the new movie with an animat- ed short subject produced at their Florida animation studio. Off His Rockers is an experi- mental cartoon combining traditionally drawn characters with computer-generated objects. The story involves a young boy obsessed with a video game and his long-Sogated rocking horse who tries to tear the boy away from the computer screen and into his imagination. The computer work in Off His Rockers is truly exceptional, lending a wonderful degree of realism to the story's action and creating remarkably flexible character in the rocking horse. Computer work can too often look rigid and geometric, but the fluidity here is excellent. The blend of hand-drawn and computer-avoided animation is as harmonious as it was in the ballroom scene of Beauty and the Beast, but while these two elements work very well together, a third is unfortunately missing — an engaging story. Off His Rockers has a cute premise, but the slow pace is better for show- ing off new animation skills that storytelling abilities. As an experiment, the short is an unqualified success. As entertainment, it fails a bit short.

The Raid is a bit better when it comes to destruction of the original work.

Not only does the film lack plot and charac- ter development, but it is also confusing and discontinuous. Tsui must have assumed that his audience has plenty of prior knowledge of the story before entering the theater. The movie jumps from place to place without offering explanations or introducing any of the characters. This is annoying for people who have read the novel. I could not begin to imagine how would some people who have not been introduced to the plot for the first time.

The movie is so incoherent that it could hardly be considered a narrative. It might as well be called 10 minutes of highlights from Tsui's production. I was disgusted enough to consid- er leaving halfway through the screening.

Continuity, but that is the only improvement. The movie has only one objective — to make money. Coming from the director who made Chinese Ghost Story, The Raid is another disap- pointment. The fairly simple plot involves a group of nationalist soldiers on a mission to destroy a poison gas factory in Manchuria during World War II. This is the only thing that's straightforward in the movie. With a seemingly endless cast, there is no room for character development as the unconvincing characters come and go and have little to no impact. The film is so dominated by action and dry humor that the most a character will ever do is put on a smile for the camera or get down screaming during a fight.

Although the movie is supposed to be full of action that will capture your attention, it is more like a comedy of errors. Tsui's ideas of action sequences include plots that never run out of bullets even after a continuous shooting of about 20 rounds, matching guns that always miss their wide-open targets, and a knife that is capable of stopping a bullet in a split sec- ond. When the movie takes a break from its ridiculous action scenes, it attempts to amuse with skill humor and utterly melodramatic music. It even goes far as setting up one scene as an apparent advertisement for an upcoming music video. Although some of the dialogue is funny, most is quite dull and tacky. Like most Hong Kong commercial movies, The Raid will do anything to get a laugh out of you or sell an extra ticket at the box office. The end result is a film that has absolutely no value.

Films of director Tsui Hark suffer from disjointed style

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Adam's brighton expection that is assoc- uted with name of Tsui Hark, who is best known for Chinese Ghost Story. That's where the differences end.

The screenplay for Swallows is based on an original novel by Kam Yang. Anyone who has read any of Kam's novels has probably found them fascinating and irresistible, but unfortunately the only thing that the novel and movie have in common is the title and characters. Tsui took Kam's masterpieces template and turned it into something disjointed and characters.

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