

Meatball forecast is sunny

"Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs" **PG**

★ ★ ★

BY ANDY MOORE
Reviewer

You might remember "Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs" from your childhood. I don't, but perhaps someone out there does.

The film is a 3D computer animated Sony production, loosely based on a children's book written in the late 1970s by Judi Barrett and illustrated by Ron Barrett. This is the first 3D movie I've ever seen, and the 3D experience really freaked me out at first.

Despite the movie's expected predictability, it's entertaining enough for all ages, and the 3D flying meatballs are absolutely terrifying.

The story takes place on the remote island of Swallow Falls, located underneath the "A" in "Atlantic Ocean." The city's economy is completely dependent on sardine production and is the home of an eccentric inventor named Flint Lockwood (voiced by Bill Hader), the man responsible for inventing rat-birds, a monkey-thought transmitter, and spray-on shoes that never come off. After so many failed inventions, he creates a machine that turns water into food. As you can

imagine, the machine backfires. If you're a vegetarian, you might not like it when the sky starts raining gigantic hotdogs.

For once, you can watch a children's movie that isn't made by Disney. Created by Sony Pictures Entertainment, which is rumored to be making a Smurfs movie, "Cloudy" will probably turn into another multi-million dollar franchise: cheaply made Happy Meal toys with plastic food and a miniature model of Flint Lockwood, action figures of Flint and his talking monkey Steve, video games for Xbox, an illustrated book based off the movie that was based off of a book and, of course, ad campaigns with actual food products. These were the thoughts going through my head as I sat in a theater full of whining, screaming children while wearing a pair of giant 3D glasses.

I can't complain though. Watching a tornado made from spaghetti come from the screen was pretty awesome, and the cast of "Cloudy" was extremely well chosen. I laughed when I realized that Bill Hader, the voice of Flint Lockwood, is also one of the cops in "Superbad," and I knew beforehand that Bruce Campbell, the man who coined the phrase, "This is my broomstick," in "Army

of Darkness," is the voice of the town's corrupt mayor who spends the town's entire budget on sardines. James Caan is Flint's humble father, the bait shop owner who is constantly throwing around fisherman metaphors. It's surprising that Caan's career went from Sonny Corleone in "The Godfather" to animated bait shop owner with a severe unibrow.

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"Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs"

Based on a children's book written by Judi Barrett in 1978

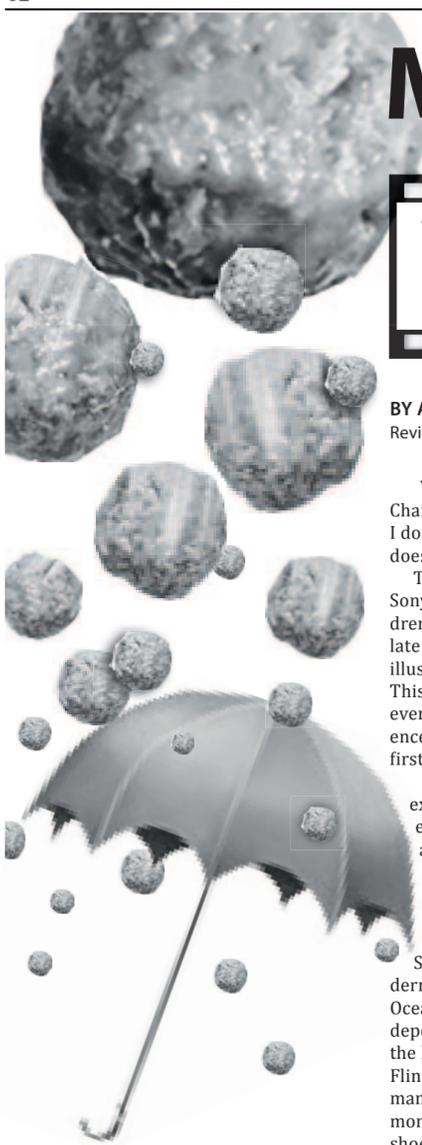
Plot: In the town of Chewandswallow, the sky rains down breakfast, lunch, and dinner foods three times a day.



Photo provided by guardian.co.uk

It's unfair, though, that Neil Patrick Harris is Steve the Monkey, whose lines are all transmitted through another one of Flint's inventions (he usually just yells "Steve" and throws his feces). In addition, "Cloudy" has supporting roles by Andy Samberg, Anna Faris, Al Roker and, finally, Mr. T, who plays an extremely hyperactive cop.

If you've read the book "Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs," you're probably thinking that this movie strays so far from the book that it's not worth it. I did not have a frame of reference when I walked into the theater, but I enjoyed it. After seeing this, I wonder if I'll like "Where the Wild Things Are" or Tim Burton's version of "Alice and Wonderland."



Photos modified from scholastic.com and allmoviephoto.com

"Muse" explores Orwellian society

Pick of the Week

Muse
"The Resistance"

★ ★ ★ ★

BY COREY BOMMEL
Reviewer



Photos provided by muse.mu

What kind of music do you think of when an Orwellian dystopia is mentioned? Science fiction electronica, symphonic harmonies or wailing guitars? British rockers Muse think it's all of the above, giving their audience a little of each in their fifth album, "The Resistance."

"The Resistance" is Muse's latest offering, and it draws on many influences. The lyrics invoke a 1984 future world, where secret police and underground resistances are rampant. The album begins with "Uprising," an electronica-infused song with small guitar riffs reminiscent of Blondie's "Call Me." "United States of Eurasia" is one of my favorite tracks on the album. The track lends huge influence credits to greats such as Freddie Mercury or Jeff Buckley, and sounds like a close cousin to "Bohemian Rhapsody." Queen influences can once again be noted in the guitar riffs on "Guiding Light."

The outro of the album consists of a 15-minute long series of operatic proportions. This three-part symphony entitled "Exogenesis" blends classical music with dystopian lyrics. Close your eyes and you are transported to a

15-minute independent film, a modern space opera. Several songs seem out of place in the overall scheme, as the album tries to be all over the place, but at the same time tries not to move at all.

Muse formed in the early 1990s in Devon, England. Coming from a handful of separate bands, Muse began when its three permanent members, Matthew Bellamy, Christopher Wolstenholme and Dominic Howard, came together as one. They began to play as a side project, and in 1994 entered a battle of the bands under the name Rocket Baby Dolls. Following an unexpected win, during which the band destroyed their instruments, they decided they needed to take their musical career seriously. They quit their jobs, dropped out of college, changed their name to Muse and moved away from home to chase their dreams.

Muse began to gain fans in the late 1990s, winning recognition from Sawmills studios, a local production company. Under the Dan-

gerous record label, Muse released two EPs, one of which reached No. 3 on the indie singles chart. Muse released their first album, "Showbiz," in 1998, which drew criticism for being too similar to the band Radiohead. The album garnered enough notice that Muse followed its release on the road, opening for such bands as the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Foo Fighters. In 2001, Muse released "Origin of Symmetry," which took their music to new levels. It was more experimental with the use of new instruments, including an expanded drum kit, a mellotron and expanded vocal range. A dispute involving the band and their U.S. distributor Maverick involving a song being radio-friendly caused the band to drop the label and delay the album's U.S. release. During the same time period Muse released a live DVD of two performances in Paris, entitled "Hullabaloo."

In 2003 Muse released "Absolution," which earned more popularity. It was credited with

giving the band a foothold in the U.S. market, reaching No. 1 on the Billboard Top Heatseekers list. Britain voted it the 21st best British album ever, and Kerrang! Magazine rated it the No. 2 album of the 21st century. In 2006, fans saw the release of "Black Holes and Revelations," an album heavily influenced by the science fiction genre. The album reached No. 1 and No. 9 on the charts in the U.K. and U.S., respectively. Muse continued to rise in popularity, touring the world and playing in several major musical festivals. Several songs even made it into popular media, appearing in commercials and many video games, including the Rock Band and Guitar Hero franchises.

Overall Muse's latest album leaves you with a good taste in your mouth. Bellamy still brings Radiohead to mind when you hear him sing, but many songs in this album distinguish him as a separate entity. Still, if you are a fan of Radiohead or past Muse albums, this is an album you will want to pick up.



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