KUNG FU PANDA 2 REVIEW

When you're craving noodles like there's no tomorrow, but there's only popcorn in front of you, you definitely aren't in Chinatown but at the cinemas... watching *Kung Fu Panda 2* with its all-star casting including high-profile voice talent from those such as Jack Black and Angelina Jolie. As the first movie was a smashing hit that left people singing “Kung Fu Fighting” by the Foo Fighters as they exited the theaters, the second follows suit bearing an all-too-obvious hint that at least one more film is to follow.

As big as Po the Panda is on heart and appetite, the movie is on humor and fun. The audience today could barely go but a handful of minutes without erupting in laughter, whether it be Po's witty comment about stopping for a snack en route to a journey or doing a move not even Jackie Chan would be able to master. He is joined by the rest of the Furious Five, the characters originally created by Ethan Reiff and Cyrus Voris (who also happen to be friends of our EIC's family) appearing in the sequel without seeming forced. Master Shifu too falls under

this category, serving as the catalyst for adventure in the film by urging Po to “find his inner peace”, a plot device essential not only to Po's development as a character but to the overall plot of the film and the mandatory defeat of the villain.

Shen the Peacock, the villain of the story, is introduced at the start of the film in a cartoon sequence paying tribute to traditional Chinese art, emphasizing a cultural element to the film even though it is all very obviously fictional. His backstory is interwoven with Po's to a great extent, creating a bond between the two characters which makes the climax more intense and also serves as a great bridge to a next film for the franchise to continue. While such backstory sequences had a distinct art style, Dreamworks did a superb job with the three-dimensional modeling for the cartoon. If seen in 3D, the effects are subtle enough to not give one a migraine as they supplement rather than overpower the characters, plot, and scenery. Depth is added by a gentle effect being put on village houses, ropes, and (my absolute favorite) Master Shifu's braided fur.

Finally, the best thing about this movie is how it is appropriate for all ages. The themes are universal such as acceptance, family, friends, and growing up are all pulled off in a touching manner while the plethora of humor keeps the movie lighthearted and enjoyable. If you like animation, martial arts, animals, or just fancy a good laugh then this is the flick for you.

Final Grade: A-