

## Ghostbusters (2016) review

By Jamie Eastling

Rotten Tomatoes rating given: ½ star

Synopsis (from IMDB): Following a ghost invasion of Manhattan, paranormal enthusiasts Erin Gilbert (Kristen Wiig) and Abby Yates (Melissa McCarthy), nuclear engineer Jillian Holtzmann (Kate McKinnon), and subway worker Patty Tolan (Leslie Jones) band together to stop the otherworldly threat.

I felt the film did a few things right while completely botching others. Let's talk about what I hated first, because let's face it we all like it when someone tears down movies in funny ways.

Ghostbusters spends a lot of time dropping in references and throwbacks to the original film which, for me, were delightfully sentimental. At the same time, if I wanted to watch the original I would have stolen my parents' copy. What? I don't have money for things like movies and my ultra conservative Christian parents would probably only watch the original Ghostbusters films while drunk, which is to say never. Fans of the original will be relieved to know that the atrocious Fall Out Boy version of the theme song only appears once while the original makes three appearances plus one orchestral remake.

The storyline that brings together our four main characters is fairly solid, but falls flatter than my chest in the build-up to the climax of the film. I feel like there's a sex joke to be made here, but I don't think sex deserves to be ridiculed like that. The problem is that the plot is taken way too seriously and doesn't feel like I'm supposed to laugh. As I mentioned, they threw in a shit ton of references to the original Ghostbusters as if those references were funny on their own. Jillian Holtzmann ("Holtz") gets a fight scene that was clearly meant to elicit laughter at its unabashed Trinity-from-the-Matrix-meets-River-Song-from-Firefly routine but instead it just kinda left me scratching my head.

Patty Tolan, despite what I'm sure seemed like a fully-fleshed out character in the GOP Conve-I mean writers' room, felt like a stereotype of a every black woman character. I tried to like her, in part because I wanted to wave two middle fingers at the racist haters who basically chased her off Twitter in a virtual lynch mob (Fuck Milo Yiannopoulos). Unfortunately, she was pretty much the Sassy Black Woman trope embodied (Still, fuck Milo Yiannopoulos). I know Leslie Jones tried to defend her portrayal, and honestly, I'll probably watch just about anything Leslie Jones does from now on but her character was terribly written and it wasn't fair to a woman who clearly has more talent than the stilted Kristen Wiig.

Did I mention how awful Kristen Wiig's performance was? I'm pretty sure that was a cardboard cutout of her slapped onto a body double, but that might be overly generous. Wiig was so awful that no amount of superb writing could have saved her. I didn't believe for a moment she was Erin Gilbert. I didn't believe she was attracted to Kevin (Chris Hemsworth) much less ready to drop her panties at the first sight of him (which, by language of the dialogue is what I've

gathered was supposed to be the takeaway). That's an impressive feat of failure considering that my homoflexible self would drop her panties in a heartbeat for Chris Hemsworth.

Speaking of shitty performances, I can't tell if it was bad acting or shitty writing, but my guess is both. What the fuck was up with McKinnon hanging out in the back constantly drooling over her equipment? Was there possibly something slightly more funny they could have had her do? Holtz is a goddamn nuclear engineer and you couldn't have had her do more than sit around half-smiling as she nurses a weapon like an ice cream cone? For such a transphobic shitlord, I was expecting something over-the-top, but I don't think she has more than 50 words in the entire script.

One more thing before I transition over to the things I liked. The jokes were pretty awful. One of the things I've been learning in my own efforts to write standup is that you don't use other people's jokes (there are exceptions, but they do not apply here). Almost every joke in the film was a poorly reused old joke. In some ways, I feel like the writers set these women up to fail in a franchise that has a very loyal (albeit horribly misogynistic crybaby) fanbase. You know how they say a monkey typing would have an infinitesimal chance of replicating a work of Shakespeare? The writing was comparable to a first attempt at testing that theory. The entirety of the film was written as if old jokes and nostalgia could carry us through the nearly two hour film. I'd accuse Tommy Wiseau of ghostwriting the script, but I'm not sure Wiseau could fuck up this bad. At least *The Room* was funny.

Ok, have you had enough of all that was awful in *Ghostbusters*? Let's talk about what I liked. Melissa McCarthy. Boom! That woman is an angel. Seriously, forget McKinnon and Wiig, just give Jones and McCarthy this script and the freedom to improvise and this film would have been a lot stronger. McCarthy is such an emotive actor that she could make me laugh at "Why did the chicken cross the road" jokes. McCarthy and Jones seemed to be completely immersed in their characters to the point that, in the case of McCarthy, I didn't see Sookie St. James. She was hilarious and I love her more now than I did after watching *Gilmore Girls*.

I loved that they made Kevin the male bimbo. Although it was fairly heteronormative, I feel like it made sense in the context of role reversals to have a famous male actor play a character who is nothing but fan service.

And that's about it... There was literally very little that could be said about this movie that was positive. This film was certifiable shit and not for the reasons the dudebro "true fans" were saying it would be.