This Wimpy Kid episode is based on a combination of wacky misadventures culled from both the third (“The Last Straw”) and fourth (“Dog Days”) books in the best-selling series created by Jeff Kinney. The movie was directed by David Bowers (Wimpy Kid 2) who reassembled his principal cast, including Zach Gordon in the title role as the ever-beleaguered Greg Heffley, as well as Robert Capron as his rotund BFF, Rowley Jefferson.

The picture’s point of departure is opening day at the overcrowded public pool which is where we find Greg none too thrilled at the prospect of sharing the water all summer with smelly adults and infants who aren’t yet potty-trained. He’d prefer to be frequenting the nearby facilities at the sparsely populated Plainview Heights Country Club, especially after he learns that Holly Hills (Peyton List), the cute classmate he has a big crush on, will be teaching tennis there.

After all, Greg’s only vacation plans involve playing video games at home and hanging out with Holly. Trouble is, when he asked her for her phone number on the final day of school, she got distracted in the middle of writing it down and never got around to finishing it for him.

But as luck would have it, Rowley’s family just happens to be members of the same country club, and he offers to sneak his pal into the place as his personal guest. Anything would be better than the boring activities Greg’s mother (Rachael Harris) and father (Steve Zahn) have planned for him like fishing, starting a reading club, and attending Civil War reenactments.

Therefore, to avoid a fate worse than death and to simultaneously see the girl of his dreams every day, Greg tells his folks that he’s found a summer job at Plainview Heights. Of course, in accordance with the “One Big Lie” sitcom formula, it’s just a matter of time before the truth comes out.

First, however, the boys’ futile attempted cover-up sets in motion a concatenation of silly slapstick scenarios. Between a steady diet of sight gags and bodily function fare, Wimpy Kid 3 is certainly entertaining enough to engage youngsters in the target demographic. Adults might not find the film’s unfocused, joke-driven style of sophomoric storytelling all that compelling, but they will nevertheless laugh a lot and appreciate the squeaky clean brand of humor so rarely found even in kiddie flicks anymore.

A comfy, feelgood comedy that's fun for the whole family.

Excellent (3.5 stars)
Rated PG for rude humor.
Running time: 94 minutes
Distributor: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment
Blu-ray/DVD Combo Pack Extras: Gag reel; deleted scenes; Class Clown animated comic; and more.

To see a trailer for Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days, visit: http://www.youtube.com/movie?v=KUiFUELaWpo&feature=mv_sr

To order a copy of the Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days Blu-ray/DVD Combo Pack, visit: http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/B005LAIIT4/ref%3dnosim/thslfofire-20