

Roland Emmerich's apocalyptic adventure arrives on DVD

Written by Kam Williams

Roland Emmerich's latest overblown apocalyptic adventure fails to measure up to his earlier offerings, despite its being filled with his trademark bombastic special effects. Stripped of its pretense, the picture is basically a stock disaster flick which relies on trite dialogue while recycling a host of the genre's groan-inducing clichés.

On top of that, the production features frame after frame of blatant prominent ad placements, shamelessly hawking everything from Fruit Loops to Jack Daniels to Rice Krispies to Sony to Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer to Marriott Hotels to Virgin Atlantic Airways to Bentley to Caesar's Palace to Sugar Frosted Flakes to Kellogg's All Bran.

Still, those crass commercials are a minor annoyance compared to the preposterous plot. The story was ostensibly inspired by a mythical Mayan prophesy predicting that the world will end during the winter solstice of 2012. At the point of departure in 2009, we're introduced to Jackson Curtiss (John Cusack) the underappreciated author of a book which forecast the coming global crisis. And by no means is Jackson the only person aware of the impending catastrophe.

There's Charlie Frost (Woody Harrelson), a burnt-out hippie issuing dire warnings over the airwaves from a makeshift radio station. Although his broadcasts are being dismissed as the unsubstantiated rant of the lunatic fringe, there are plenty of scientists and politicians secretly taking the problem seriously.

For instance, Dr. Adrian Helmsley (Chiwetel Ejiofor) ventures 11,000 feet below sea level down an abandoned copper mine only to discover that "the Earth's crust is destabilizing." Soon after he urgently reports back to President Wilson (Danny Glover), bizarre events start the countdown to Armageddon, including every disaster imaginable from tsunami-triggering earthquakes to mass suicides in Guatemala.

Fortunately, Jackson is wise enough to jump into action, grabbing his kids (Liam James and Morgan Lily) and his ex-wife (Amanda Peet). With the help of her amateur pilot boyfriend (Tom McCarthy) they fly off in the nick of time as the runway crumbles beneath the wheels of their rickety, rented propeller plane.

No hackneyed line proves too stale for these intrepid survivors' lips as they take on one death-defying challenge after another. Brace yourself for inane banter uttered against the backdrop of incessant, blue screen pyrotechnics.

An eye-popping, insult to the intelligence strictly for the kiddies and crackpot doomsday enthusiasts.

Poor (0 stars)

Rated PG-13 for profanity and intense disaster sequences.

Running time: 158 minutes

Studio: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment

DVD Extras: Deleted scenes, alternate ending, Adam Lambert music video, a documentary about director Roland Emmerich, commentary by the director and scriptwriter, and a Discovery Channel featurette.

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<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B001OQCV2E?ie=UTF8&tag=thslfofire-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B001OQCV2E>

To see a trailer for 2012, visit: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OhImY5ZGD6o>