



Draco and Harry's kiss looks like it could lead to a home run for the both of them. What are the chances that they'll end up in bed together within moments of this PDA? No really, I'm curious; what are the chances that a simple kiss results in couples doing the deed? E-mail entertainment@gateway.ualberta.ca and let me know.

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Visible to the critical eye

Arthur and The Invisibles

Directed by Luc Besson
Starring Freddie Highmore, Mia Farrow, and the voice talents of Madonna, David Bowie, Snoop Dogg, Jason Bateman, Rob Corddry, Robert De Niro, Emilio Estevez, Jimmy Fallon, Harvey Keitel and Chazz Palminteri
Opens Friday, 12 January
Empire Theatres

MARIA KOTOVYCH
Arts & Entertainment Staff

The hidden adventures that occur in backyards come to life once again in *Arthur and The Invisibles*. Instead of having kids running around and encountering huge ants and beetles like in *Honey, I Shrank the Kids*, this movie is set in a magical fairy world that humans can't see.

This world—created using a combination of live-action and CGI technology—is inhabited by little creatures called the Minimoyos, and their little kingdom is threatened by the evil wizard Maltazard the Cursed.

Arthur (Freddie Highmore) is a ten-year-old human boy living with his grandmother (Mia Farrow). Arthur's grandfather, an explorer, disappeared four years ago, but not before regaling

Arthur with tales of travel, adventure and the great treasure found in the magical world of the Minimoyos. When Arthur's grandmother receives notice that her home will be repossessed in three days, Arthur sets out to find this treasure, and with the help of some of his grandfather's friends, enters the secret world of the Minimoyos, becoming one himself. They soon enlist Arthur's help in fighting Maltazard. Arthur leaves on his journey, along with the beautiful Princess Selenia (voiced by Madonna) and her little brother, Betameche (voiced by Fallon).

The animation of the film is beautiful, notably its use of vivid colours and subtle lighting effects. The animation carefully captures the smallest of details, such as delicate blonde highlights in Princess Selenia's red hair.

The film's creators deserve applause for deviating from the stereotype of a helpless blonde princess found in many fairy tales. Not wanting to be completely devoid of typecasts, this film features ethnic diversity through the Minimoyos, including an Italian-American and several African-Americans. All of these characterizations culminate in a really bizarre nightclub scene featuring an incredibly creepy club owner (voiced

by, and eerily resembling, Snoop Dogg). Arthur is even involved in a fight scene/dance number during the song "Stayin' Alive."

The adult human characters in the film are laughable, but Farrow's talents are wasted in a role that has her doing nothing but running around and looking worried. Similarly, Arthur's annoying parents are self-absorbed, clueless and dazed idiots who have no interest in parenting and who could not have possibly created a child as smart as Arthur. Arthur's dog is a more interesting and appealing character than those three. A poor set of adult human characters is supported with an equally poor script.

Fortunately, the characters become slightly more interesting (with the exception of the ethnically-stereotyped characters) once Arthur enters the world of the Minimoyos. The script improves marginally at this point in the movie as well, but there are very few witty, punchy or thought-provoking moments. The character of Betameche, who was probably supposed to be the comic relief, falls flat.

However, given the option of watching either *Arthur and The Invisibles* or some of the sequels to *Honey, I Shrank the Kids*, I'd quickly choose *Arthur*.

Little Mosque liked by Allah

Although it's no *All in the Family*, *Little Mosque* is sure to boost CBC's ratings

Little Mosque on The Prairie

Written Zarqa Nawaz
Directed by Michael Kennedy
Starring Sheila McCarthy, Carlo Rota, Zaib Shaikh, Sitara Hewitt, Debra McGrath, Manoj Sood, Arlene Duncan, Derek McGrath, Neil Crone
Now airing on CBC

MATT FREHNER
Editor-in-Chief

With a publicity launch that included camels and hundreds of pounds of free shawarma, expectations were high for Zarqa Nawaz's new CBC sitcom, *Little Mosque on the Prairie*. The title should give some inkling of the show's tone: a wholesome, thoroughly Canadian comedy about some Muslims in wheat-country.

Our national broadcaster's answer to CTV hit *Corner Gas*, the little mosque in the fictional town of Mercy made big waves with pundits over the last week, as the *New York Times*, BBC and even CNN picked up the story—many without having seen the show. "A comedy about Muslims?" they quipped, "How juicy! How postmodern!"

But those looking for controversy will be sorely disappointed. The Muslim angle is more a fresh way of approaching the quirks of multicultural Canadiana than a biting commentary on North America's closet (or not-so-closet, if you listen to the likes of CNN's Glenn Beck) Islamophobia.

Fortunately for the rest of us, the show is actually pretty funny.

Zaib Shaikh stars as lawyer-turned-imam Amaar Rashid, who answers an ad in a Toronto newspaper and ends up leading a small-town rural mosque—fronted by a construction company renting space in the ailing local church. Rashid is positioned against Mercy's more traditional Muslims and their old imam, who preaches about the hidden agenda of products like licorice, rye bread and wine gums.

Even though the show seems staunchly apolitical, the scenes involving media personalities are scathing in their veracity.

Heaped in small-town-versus-big-town stereotypes, LMOTP sees the new imam frustrated over the naïve local media and his inability to order a skim-milk cappuccino, playing the annoyed, yuppie Torontonian to a T. However, Shaikh's best scene comes before he arrives in Mercy. While detained at Pearson airport as a suspected terrorist, he remarks, "What are you going to do, deport me to Syria?" To which the cop retorts that

terrorists don't get to choose to which country they get deported.

The few bits of deadpan, urgently polite Canadian humour save an otherwise-lukewarm script and make the show worth watching. *Little Mosque* riffs on Muslim stereotypes without being smarmy or cheerleading the Muslim cause.

While it screams CBC political correctness at times—none of the jokes are deliciously split-your-ribs offensive—the safe humour isn't irredeemable. And besides, the characters wouldn't be very Canadian if they weren't self-consciously PC and constantly worried about offending each other.

And even though the show seems staunchly apolitical, the scenes involving media personalities are scathing in their veracity. The segment where the local redneck radio host interviews Rashid, and refers to him as "Johnny Jihad," is eerily reminiscent of Beck's CNN interview with the first-ever Muslim congressman, where Beck asks, "Sir, prove to me that you're not working with our enemies."

Still, it's doubtful that, as director Michael Kennedy hopes, *Little Mosque* will do for Muslim-Christian relations what *All in the Family* did for racial bigotry in the '60s and '70s. But it's a noble goal nonetheless, and in concert with the show's palpably Canadian comedy, *Little Mosque* might just be the sly hit CBC desperately needs.