

“Brigsby Bear”

By Helen Lutz

Years ago, when in elementary school, we would practice our fire drills, tornado drills, and our atomic bomb drills. Yes, I’m sure that taking cover under my little desk would have totally protected me from nuclear fallout especially since we were never even instructed to close the windows – our school wasn’t air conditioned. Occasionally there would be a commercial on television encouraging everyone to purchase a bona-fide bomb shelter. The saying “Look! Russian paratroopers!” had a familiar ring to it (perhaps that comment works even better in today’s political climate).



So what happens to an infant boy, kidnapped from the hospital and taken to a remote part of the Utah wilderness, who grows up inside a bomb shelter? He’s told that it’s not safe to venture outside as the atmosphere is poisonous. There aren’t many surviving people who still populate the planet. So the little boy, James (Kyle Mooney) grows up, at least physically in Dave McCary’s new film “Brigsby Bear.” The only parents he’s ever known Ted and April (Mark Hamill and Jane Adams), keep up the charade loving him and teaching him. The only show available on television is a children’s show Brigsby Bear. A new episode arrives every week and James lives for Brigsby’s next adventure.

Not realizing that his life is a fictitious lie, imagine James’s surprise when the FBI and police show up at the family bunker having finally put two and two together and suspecting that the strange people they occasionally come across have something to hide. Uprooted from the only home he has ever known, James is taken into protective custody – without so much as a gas mask! James holds his breath as long as possible trying to protect himself from the noxious fumes, and is completely surprised by the delightful freshness of the night air.

At the age of 25, James must now learn to navigate an entirely new world. While at the police station his life continues to unravel. His birth family, eager to be with him, must tread slowly. The simple things in life such as real television, movies and even Coca Cola are a tremendous amount for him to absorb. Much to his chagrin, he learns that he was an audience of one for his favorite show Brigsby Bear. His fake parents went to great lengths to prepare the show specifically for him each week.

Exploring his new world with the innocence of a child, James’s mind begins to open and stretch. If the world has no Brigsby Bear, perhaps it is his mission to see to it that it does. With the help of several new-found friends James takes on the enormous task of creating and shooting a Brigsby Bear movie for the big screen.

“Brigsby Bear” tells the story of a young man, robbed of so many things in life, who follows his heart despite obstacles. Friends along his journey, especially police Detective Vogel played by Greg Kinnear help him find his way and adjust to his new life. In order to appreciate “Brigsby Bear” we must become childlike, seeing the grandeur of the world through the eyes of an adult child and a funny, although heroic, bear. On a scale of one to four Hart Beats ... I give “Brigsby Bear” TWO 1/2 HARTS. To fully enjoy this film one must appreciate an off-the-wall story line understanding that it is a fantasy full of holes.