

“Early Man”

By Helen Lutz

My grandmother was born in 1906. Cars were something new and everyone wanted a driver’s license. There was no test since there were so few cars, but my grandmother got her Missouri driver’s license and kept it valid until she passed – never learning how to drive. My mother was born in 1925; cars were still something of a rarity. My grandmother insisted she learn to drive when I started kindergarten in 1958. Now almost every family owns at least two cars and in the case of those with teenagers, probably more. It’s all about history and how times change.



History is one of those ‘required’ courses too often taught by boring teachers. One of my history teachers was so dull that I can’t remember Sister ever having even cracked a smile. In most cases we just had to be good at memorization to pass the tests. Ardman Animation and director Will Gluck take us back in history to the time of the cavemen in “Early Man” right about lunch time and without a McDonald’s in sight. A stray meteor interrupts their very strange meal devastating the dinosaurs and leaving just a round, searing object deep in its crater. So what’s one to do with a strange round object hotter than the dickens – invent soccer of course!

A couple of years ago I had the opportunity to scratch an item off my bucket list during a visit to the Mayan Ruin of Chichen Itza. My husband and I chose not to board a tour bus, but to take a private tour. Jerry our guide had studied the area his entire life and shared a multitude of fabulous facts one of which was the playing field. He explained the game with teams, hoops and great balls of fire – it was good to be on the winning team; the losers didn’t fair too well. So the idea of soccer predating our current concept is actually not totally preposterous.

In “Early Man” evolution moves forward and we meet our leading caveman Dug (voiced by Eddie Redmayne). Dug and his tribe live in a perfectly wonderful valley chasing after elusive rabbits for lunch. Dug suggests that perhaps hunting a larger animal would feed the tribe better, but is reprimanded by the chief pointing out that even a rabbit pushes them to their limits. So what is the tribe to do when a neighboring tribe, which has evolved into the Bronze Age, invades their precious valley seizing the mining rights?

Dug gets captured and taken through a city market filled with all sorts of trinkets, like pans and spears. When confronted by our villain of the Bronze Age, Lord Nooth (voiced by Tom Hiddleston) in what appears to be a scene right out of ancient Rome, Dug learns that he is in a football (or as we call it soccer) stadium. In order to save his tribe and valley Dug challenges Lord Nooth’s primo professional team the Real Bronzios to a game. Knowing that the dim-witted cavemen will be unable to master the sport, it’s on like Donkey Kong and Dug returns to his village to begin training.

The entire story is a fun and pun filled experience especially when the cute little pan seller Goona (voiced by Maisie Williams) sides with Dug and joins the caveman team. Girls aren’t allowed to play in the Bronze Age, but that doesn’t mean that they don’t know how. Full of heart, “Early Man” teaches us the evils of greed and the tribulations of teamwork through the art of laughter. On a scale of one to four Hart Beats ... I give “Early Man” TWO 1/2 HARTS. You can’t help but laugh at the messenger bird carrying messages from the Queen to Lord Noth.