

Mr Bean's Holiday A film review by Rev Dr Steve Taylor

(Originally written for New Zealand, Methodist Touchstone. Reprinted with permission.)

Mr Bean was born as comedy TV more than 17 years ago. Short skits built to fit around commercial advertising breaks were woven together by the acting brilliance of Rowan Atkinson. It achieved a sort of TV cult status, with 18 episodes between 1990 and 1995 and a further 24 episodes between 2002 and 2003.

Such comic beginnings ensure the task of re-incarnating Mr Bean as a feature length movie remains no easy feat. A 90-minute feature film demands a plot, rather than a series of disconnected sketches. Characters need to develop, while the normally silent Mr Bean needs to speak.

Waitress on Eurostar: Un café?

Mr. Bean: Oui.

Waitress on Eurostar: Du sucre?

Mr. Bean: Non.

Waitress on Eurostar: You speak very good French.

Mr. Bean: Gracias!

Director Steve Bendelack and writers Simon McBurney and Hamish McColl get my standing ovation. They have crafted a clever plot. *Mr Bean's Holiday* is a film about a film premiere. A director, starring cast and promotional posters become the backdrop to Mr Bean's holiday journey across France. Mr Bean travels as the archetypical British tourist, negotiating the Eurostar with his three French words, "oui", "non" and "gracias", all in search of that Holy British Grail, a sandy Mediterranean beach. That now indispensable holiday item, the camcorder, is skillfully woven into the movie's comic climax. Mr Bean takes his final bow on stage at the Cannes Film Festival, allowing him to gracefully step off stage and onto the golden sands that are the Cannes beach.

The result is simultaneously both intellectually satisfying and a stomach-holding laughfest. A feature was the use of pace. Given that no human can laugh for 90 minutes, every full length comedy needs to allow the audience time to wipe away the tears. Mr Bean creeping along trapped inside a wooden shed, or waiting for a French mini motorbike to appear through the summer haze is exquisite breathing space.

While *Mr Bean's Holiday* is rumoured to be the end of a character, Rowan Atkinson shows that he is no acting has been (pun intended). The busking scene in which he moves from miming hip-hop dancer to opera singer showcases his extraordinary acting talents, as does his physical assault on a high class restaurant lobster. Rowan is a physical contortionist par excellence.

Hearing your children laugh makes any parents day. *Mr Bean's Holiday* was our family's holiday treat. It left both a seven year old and ten year old in stitches and their parents wiping tears of laughter from their cheeks.

We agreed together to award Mr Bean a well-earned 5 laugh rating.

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