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Patty Tolan (Leslie Jones), Abby Yates (Melissa McCarthy), Erin Gilbert (Kristen Wiig) and Jillian Holtzmann (Kate McKinnon) investigate paranormal occurrences in "Ghostbusters."

POINTLESS EXORCISE

ACTION AND PLOT LARGELY LACKING IN PAUL FEIG'S 'GHOSTBUSTERS'

By Christopher Lawrence
LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

Relax. The much-maligned new version of "Ghostbusters" isn't going to ruin your childhood.

But it may put a damper on your night out.

If anything, the reboot/remake/whatever is similar to the scene in 1989's "Ghostbusters II" in which

Ray (Dan Aykroyd) and Winston (Ernie Hudson) prance around in their uniforms during a party full of disinterested children while Winston exclaims, "Why don't we all sit down, and we'll have fun!"

Slimer's there, as is pretty much the exact same Ghostbusters logo and a very similar Ecto-1, although this one's a refurbished hearse, not an ambulance. But a series of Stan Lee-style cameos from most

of the original's stars — as new characters, if you can call them that — is more distracting than nostalgic.

Still, if this "Ghostbusters" had to be made, at least it's in good hands with director Paul Feig ("Bridesmaids," "Spy"), who cowrote the script with Kate Dippold, who penned Feig's "The Heat."

Erin (Kristen Wiig) is a physicist on the cusp of tenure at Columbia

when a book on the paranormal she wrote years ago with her childhood friend, Abby (Melissa McCarthy), resurfaces on Amazon.

Embarrassed by the professional ramifications, Erin tracks down Abby to plead with her to take it off the site. There she meets Holtzmann ("Saturday Night Live's" Kate McKinnon), Abby's engineering lab partner. Abby and Holtzmann
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are still investigating paranormal events, and before long, they drag the fussy Erin into the field, where she repeatedly gets slimed with gallons upon gallons of ectoplasm as though Erin were taping a decade's worth of Nickelodeon Kids' Choice Awards.

Then, after an MTA worker named Patty ("Saturday Night Live's" Leslie Jones) encounters a ghost in a subway tunnel, she inexplicably becomes the fourth Ghostbuster, because that's just how African-Americans get into the mix in these movies.

Review

Movie: "Ghostbusters"

Running time: 117 minutes

Rating: PG-13; supernatural action and some crude humor

Grade: B-

Now playing: At multiple locations

In place of Annie Potts, these Ghostbusters hire hunky, lunky Kevin (Chris Hemsworth, in full-on amusing himbo mode).

But the biggest difference between the two movies is that this time around, there's a hotel janitor (Neil Casey) who's actively freeing all the ghosts because he was bullied. Or something like that. It wasn't really clear. Also, he seems to have a thing for the 1920s. And Michael Jackson's "Thriller" video, apparently. Nothing about his character makes much sense.

Wiig is uptight. McCarthy, for once, is restrained. And Jones is her usual brash self. But the movie's salvation comes in the form of McKinnon. Her Holtzmann is a frenetic, steampunk wonderland, setting a portion of the lab on fire while dancing with blowtorches to DeBarge's "Rhythm of the Night."

Humming along at a frequency high above that of the rest of the cast, McKinnon offers the closest thing to Bill Murray's mischievous spirit that made the 1984 original so much fun. Maybe it's because I'm not all that familiar with her work,



Melissa McCarthy, Kate McKinnon, Kristen Wiig and Leslie Jones star in director Paul Feig's "Ghostbusters."

PHOTOS COURTESY COLUMBIA PICTURES

having stopped regularly watching "SNL" around the days of Wayne and Garth, but Kate McKinnon is my new spirit animal.

This "Ghostbusters" has been plagued from the start by negative, often misogynistic fanboys worried that Feig and all these women will desecrate the original. Newsflash: The sequel did a pretty good job of that 27 years ago. The "Ghostbusters" trailer is even reportedly the most disliked in the history of YouTube. But, c'mon, there are trailers for "Ernest" and "Madea" movies on there.

Still, "Ghostbusters" tackles the controversy head-on, by having McCarthy's Abby address some of the negative comments attached to their ghostbusting videos. "You're not supposed to listen to what crazy

people write in the middle of the night," she warns Wiig's Erin.

And for the legions of dudebros who were worried about the all estrogen in this "Ghostbusters," there isn't nearly as much emphasis on girl power as you'd expect.

There also isn't nearly as much action or plot as you'd expect.

Feig and company have done just about as well as they could with this nearly impossible situation.

And they've certainly upped the visual spectacle. There are no more crudely animated dog beasts menacing Manhattan. The ghouls and specters are mostly first-rate.

But just as I ain't afraid of these ghosts. I ain't exactly entertained by them, either.

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Slimer returns in the new "Ghostbusters."