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Chilly Weather Doesn't Dampen Enthusiasm for Movies in the Park

By Daniel Smith



Front row seats were quickly snapped up at Orinda's Movies in the Park July 9. From left: Grace Bell, Avery Ghali, Cami Lovell, Ellie Rodriguez and Natalie Aiken Photo Ohlen Alexander

"definitely worth it," according to Grace Bell who was there to celebrate her 9th birthday with friends. The kids seemed to love the film's title characters: adorably ugly little critters, more into mischief and tinkering than doing harm, and only capable of speaking through squeaks and chitters. Sure, they're derivative of the Minions, but some, like 9-year-old Natalie Aiken who came to watch "The Boxtrolls" a second time, feels that the boxtrolls reign supreme. "They're funnier and, I don't wanna give away the end, but they save people," said Natalie, who was quickly reprimanded by her friends for leaking spoilers. The adult audience was more entertained by the film's portrayal of social status, humorously lampooned through the villainous character of Archibald Snatcher and his lust for that greatest of status symbols, cheese, which purportedly "brings men of respect and power together in brotherhood."

Movies in the Park was started by Lacy and the Parks and Rec Department in 2014. It is the direct descendent of Danville's Moonlight Movies, which was also started by Lacy during her tenure as Danville's recreation manager. Unlike Danville, however, the public can vote on the summer line-up for the Orinda Movies in the Park using the online survey website SurveyMonkey. In this democratic spirit 12-year-old Kate Gross proclaimed she'd "like to see old Disney movies ... like 'The Little Mermaid,'" while her parents, Beth and Justin Gross, suggested "Casablanca" or the "Star Wars" trilogy. This raises important questions for Lamorinda film fans, like: Can films with more mature MPAA ratings be shown in the park? and When did 1989's "The Little Mermaid" become old?

The Movies in the Park series continues every other Thursday with "Big Hero 6" July 23, "Maleficent" Aug. 6, and the grand finale on Aug. 20: The "Frozen" sing-a-long. Last year's sing-a-long attracted over 300 parents, children, and would-be Lamorinda Idols. That number could be even larger this year, granted, of course, there are no August showers.

Heavy fog, a chill wind, and the threat of July showers couldn't deter the 30 moviegoers who showed up last Thursday to Orinda Community Park to watch "The Boxtrolls." The film was part of Orinda's ongoing Movies in the Park series, which according to Michelle Lacy, director of Orinda's Parks and Recreation Department, usually attracts around 100 people in normal circumstances. But nothing about this summer's weather has been "normal." Several people said their friends stayed in on account of the weather.

The sunshine made a brief cameo around 8 p. m. while children were off playing on the jungle gym, leaving their parents to stake out front row seats, for which there ended up being no competition. "The Boxtrolls" started at sundown, around 8:30 p.m., and any remaining light was blotted out by the descending fog. Midway through the film a heavy sprinkling began, but the hearty audience held steadfast. Raincoats went on and umbrellas went up.

Despite the damp and cold it was still

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