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Galactic teenage love story receives mixed reviews

By Kylie Stamper

Staff reporter

In a somewhat cheesy mix of sci-fi, fantasy, romance, and drama, “The Space Between Us” plays out as a movie that is perfect for a lazy movie night on a rainy day. Directed by Peter Chelsom, the movie stars Asa Butterfield as Gardner Elliot and Britt Robertson as Tulsa. This pair puts off the vibe of awkward teenage romance with a mix of a lanky boy and an overly confident, street smart teenage girl who is always back and forth between foster homes

“The Space Between Us” follows Gardner Elliot in his adventures between Mars and Earth. Gardner is the first human being to be born on planet Mars and is left orphaned after his mother dies during childbirth. When he is 16, he decides he wants to find his father on Earth. I think of this movie as a coming-of-age love story about a boy, who has only met 14 people in his entire life, who meets a girl online and begins to talk to her. They develop a cute long-distance relationship. I didn’t even know it was possible to communicate over a video chat between Earth and Mars unless you work for NASA.

Technical logistics aside, to summarize Wikipedia, the movie begins with the introduction of Nathaniel Shepard, played by Gary Oldman. Shepard is the CEO of a program called

Genesis that is preparing to send a mission to Mars with the intent of being the first group of humans sent to colonize the planet. Sarah Elliot, the astronaut charged with leading the team heading to Mars, finds out she is pregnant while on the way to Mars. She dies in childbirth, sentencing her son Gardner to a life on Mars with limited human interaction. This event causes a dilemma within Genesis and Nathaniel has to face the question of either announcing the birth to the world and facing a disastrous fallback or keeping the birth secret to avoid any repercussions for his company.

After fights, disagreements and stressful interactions, Genesis decides to keep it a secret, meaning Gardner technically does not exist in the Earthly world. 16 years in the future, Gardner Elliot has grown into a smart, witty young boy who has used the power of the internet to meet a foster girl from Colorado. This story develops throughout the movie, but the big part starts with Gardner using his knowledge of being raised by scientists to do some digging on his mother. After finding some videos and pictures, he decides he wants to find out who his father is.

Another astronaut on the planet, who acts as Gardner’s parent figure, is Kendra Wyndham, played by Carla Gugino. She helps Gardner on his journey to begin the trek to Earth. In order for Gardner to return to Earth,

he must go through surgeries and training in order to physically withstand the demands of Earth’s atmosphere. After the surgeries and training, and 7 months on a spaceship, Gardner arrives on Earth. One thing leads to the next and Gardner ends up escaping his quarantine unit and begins his adventure to find Tulsa and meet her in person. In a whirlwind series of events ranging from a plane crash to stealing cars to ending up in Las Vegas, Tulsa and Gardner partake in a mission to find Gardner’s father.

During this mission, however, Kendra and the scientists charged with taking care of Gardner realize he will not last much longer without specific medical attention. Tulsa and Gardner’s adventure leads to the pair experiencing this first hand as Gardner’s nose starts to bleed and he collapses in the middle of Las Vegas. Without revealing too much of the ending, Gardner finds out that the person he thought was his dad is actually his uncle and his real father is still out there, closer than he realizes.

As Gardner’s health deteriorates, Kendra and Nathaniel rush him to a space jet determining that he needs a more familiar pressure to regulate his health. They start with blasting into the stratosphere, but soon realize it is not enough. Gardner is only brought back to life after shooting into outer space for a short time. Soon after this incident, Gardner travels back to Mars,

Kendra begins a training program on Earth for future Mars astronauts, and Tulsa joins the training program with the intent of getting back to Gardner to live with him on Mars.

The plot seems to grow crazier as the story goes on, with different aspects making you ask yourself how much you actually believe, but I will admit I was emotionally invested in this movie. I wanted to know what would happen next. Would Gardner die? Will Gardner and Tulsa end up together forever? Who is Gardner’s father—although, if you pay close attention to the hidden details, you can follow the clues to determine who his real father is.

Overall, I thought it was a good movie, but it is not a movie that everyone will like. Think of it as a chick flick mixed with a tiny bit of Star Wars (without the wars). It is fun, it is cute and it introduces some interesting concepts. Other than a lovey-dovey boy-meets-girl space story, it really doesn’t have the meat and potatoes of a classic movie. It received a 6.3/10 rating on IMDb, and as David Fear from Rolling Stone described, “By the time you get to the money shot of two lovers kissing in zero gravity, you’ll either be deep in this movie’s pocket or have fallen into a diabetic coma.”

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