

‘Christopher Robin’ a timeless message even if Pooh lacks spark



CHENNAI: The American fantasy drama “Christopher Robin” has something significant to say, and it seems as relevant today as it did in World War II England.

Companies slave-drive their employees to increase profits and to fill the pockets of their owners to such an extent that men become machines, forgetting the simple pleasures of life and neglecting their families. Nothing can be truer than the quip by Evelyn (Hayley Atwell) in the Marc Forster-directed film. You no longer laugh, she tells her husband, Christopher (Ewan McGregor), who is in the titular role.

Adapted from a story by Greg Brooker and Mark Steven Johnson, and inspired by A. A. Milne and E. H. Shepard’s delightful book, “Winnie-the-Pooh,” “Christopher Robin” is a live-action/CGI extension of the Walt Disney franchise with the same name. Here, in the latest adventure of the honey-loving bear Pooh, the focus shifts to Christopher who, on the eve of his departure for boarding school, bids adieu to his forest friends, Pooh, Tigger, Piglet, Eeyore, Owl and Rabbit, promising that he will never forget them.

But as he grows up and quickly matures after the death of his father and a stint in the army, his childhood friends fade away from his memory. Married with a nine-year-old daughter, Madeline (Bronte Carmichael), Christopher has no time even for them. He

works long hours as an efficiency manager in a luggage company, whose boss desperately wants to cut costs. In the mad scramble in which Christopher lands himself, Pooh finds him in London and urges him to travel toward a magical realization.

Unfortunately, this comes after dull, rather long scenes between Christopher and Pooh, and they seem labored. The bear looks clearly unhappy, devoid of any spark, and one wonders how he manages to draw the grown-up man back into the joys of childhood, nay, life itself. McGregor sleepwalks through his fantasy journey to the Sussex countryside that was once his playground, for the rendezvous with his animal friends.

The women are not very impressive either, and the overexposure of Pooh makes it apparent that the teddy has passed his sell-by date. However, Jim Cummings' voice for Pooh is spot-on, and imaginative production design, costumes and cinematography lift this tale to a higher notch.
