

The Care Bears Movie (1985)

Rated S (For high sugar content). Our ratings: V-1; L- 0; S/N-0. Running time: 1hour 17 min.

*It (love) bears all things, believes all things,
hopes all things, endures all things.*

1 Corinthians 13:7

My children were into or entering their teens when the American Greeting Cards Care Bears were popular with preschool children (mainly girls), so I was able to avoid the film when it came out in 1985. Put off by what little I saw and heard of it—bright pastel colors and icky poo voices, I have managed to avoid it until the nicely packaged “25th Anniversary Limited Edition” of the film arrived in my mail box, and thus made me feel duty-bound as a critic to watch. Although I feel, as I’d feared, like a diabetic overdosed on sugar, I must admit that the film was better than expected, with messages that are positive and uplifting. So, even though the film reminds me too much of those teachers who feel that they have to address little children in sing-songy fashion, the film apparently works for young children.

The story is told to a room-fullThe Care Bears Movie of orphans by Mr. Cherrywood (voiced by Mickey Rooney) as he and Mrs. Cherrywood are putting them to bed. Care Bears dwell up in the clouds in what they call Care-A-Lot, a beautiful place filled with rainbows and such. Their purpose is to see that the people on earth, especially the children, know that they are cared for and spread that care to others. Not so Kim and her

little brother Jason, who were abandoned by their parents, and who now look upon everyone in an unfriendly way. Adopted by two of the Care Bears, they are soon enveloped in an adventure brought on by a circus magician's nephew named Nicholas, who also feels that no one cares for him because his uncle is always berating him for his mistakes. Seduced by an evil spirit within a book of magic spells, Nicholas invokes the spells to banish all caring from the world in revenge for not being cared for himself. There are lots of adventures as Kim and Nicholas, led by the Care Bears, and joined by the animals of Feeling Forest, slowly make their way toward the circus and the final confrontation with the evil spirit-controlled Nicholas.

There are, of course, a number of songs (the title song by Carole King), most of them not very good, but they and the dialogue do convey such worthy sentiments as the need to trust others, "You gotta take a chance on somebody else." Another song addresses the young child just beginning to relate to others and learn about teamwork, "Nobody can do it alone" and "It's a power to share, a power to care." Also visually, we see the results of not caring as the magic spells take effect—a cloud quake breaking the rainbow up in Care-A-Lot, and on earth the ruined circus with its broken wagons (similar to the far more artistically rendered scenes of the blighted plain in *The Lion King* when Scar usurps the throne). The

assertion made by one of the Bears is also close to the New Testament sentiment when he says to the defiant Nicholas, "We care about everyone, even when they don't care about us!" There is more, but you get the point.

I suppose. taking a visual parables approach to the film, we could say that the care Bears are the secular equivalent of angels, angels with garish fur and cutesy tattoos on their chests so that we can identify them. All in all, despite all the commercial tie-ins—greeting cards, TV cartoon strip (some of which are included in the "Extras" of the DVD), wrapping paper, toy stuffed animals—there are some worthy elements in the film. Still, while watching I had to work hard to hold back my W.C. Fields impulse to gag and sneer.