

“Barbie”

You know you are in for something different in “Barbie” beginning with the first scene. As the theme song from “2011” fills the theater, Director Greta Gerwig pays a cinematic tribute to an iconic moment in Stanley Kubrick’s classic film. An inspired moment. The next stop is the pink wonderland of Barbieland where we meet Barbie (Margot Robbie) as she begins another day in her fantasy world. But one day her thoughts turn in a darker direction. In an attempt to find out what is wrong she climbs into her pink Corvette and heads out the portal which will take her to Los Angeles. Part way through the journey she discovers she is going to be accompanied by an unexpected guest - Ken (Ryan Gosling).

When Barbie and Ken reach Los Angeles they have very different experiences. Barbie meets Gloria (America Ferrera) and her disaffected teen age daughter Sasha (Ariana Greenblatt). Sasha would not be caught dead playing with dolls. It is the beginning of Barbie’s journey to the real world. By contrast Ken discovers the joys of patriarchy and returns to Barbieland where he creates the toxic male world which greets Barbie, Gloria and Sasha when they return. But with her new found self-awareness Barbie and her female cohorts take on Ken. No fair guessing who wins.

Among the joys which await you in “Barbie” are:

- The casting. It is hard to imagine a better choice to play Barbie than Margot Robbie. Clearly she looks the part but more importantly is the way she morphs from a vapid caricature to a soulful and self-aware woman. Ryan Gosling turns in another stellar performance and every other member of the cast does likewise, including the ever entertaining Rhea Pearlman as Barbie’s sage.
- The set for Barbie Land. For the designer it was obviously a labor of love.
- As befits a PG rated film there is no profanity and when one of the characters starts to mouth an oath they are stopped midstream with a very clever device.

- The message. At heart the film is about female empowerment, which is given eloquent voice near the end of the film in an impassioned speech by Gloria.
- The very last line of the film when Barbie returns to Los Angeles. She walks into an office building, approaches the receptionist and asks a question. The audience I was with erupted in laughter but behind the laughter was a very profound observation of Barbie's new life. A perfect ending.