

HER FAMILY / HIS™

Reviewing Family Entertainment



HERS

August is upon us. The dog days of summer are pulling to a swift close, but there is still a narrow window of opportunity to make a memory with your kids. Here are some ideas for these last few weeks of freedom...

Thunderbirds Are Go! is a live action romp based on the British television series of the 60s, written by William Osborne (*The Scorpion King*) and Michael McCullers (*Austin Powers: Goldmember*). These two writers put their comic genius together, with some out-of-this world special effects and a dash of tongue-in-cheek acting to create a quintessential kind of family film: the kind that truly makes everyone laugh together.

Jeff Tracy (Bill Paxton) and his four sons live on Tracy Island, a secret oasis in the South Pacific, tending to the world's disasters through their top-secret organization International Rescue. The youngest son, Alan Tracy (Brady Corbet), home for vacation, finds himself the only Thunderbird to save the family from the evil Mr. Hood (Ben Kingsley). With the help of his schoolmate Fermat (Soren Fulton) and Tin-Tin (Vanessa Anne Hudgens), Alan saves his family, the Bank of England and the future.

We took our fourteen-year-old son to the Vans Warped Tour to see the Aquabats, the punk-ska band of Orange County, whose music about skateboards, unrequited love and powdered milk will bring a tap to the toe and a smile to the lip.

Walking around the Ventura fairgrounds among thousands of teenagers my mind went back to a week at Woodstock and I was transported to the days of youth and music. Much of the experience was the same: there were stages everywhere, young couples and loud music. But some things were very different: vendors were selling water, magnificent athletes were skateboarding a full pike and there was a Reverse Day Care tent, where parents could escape the heat, watch a movie, read magazines and wait for their children. Who said we haven't come a long way since the 60s?

If you don't know the Aquabats, get to know them - they are fun, musically gifted and sensitive entertainers. In a backstage interview, the Bat Commander shared an insight, "It's about a magic time - before you know that there are things to fear in this world - everybody knows that magic time. Why provoke anger and more hate in music - we are about everyone from 1 to 100 - no politics, sex, drugs or anger - just music and that magic time." Take your kids to a big music tour - it will transport you back to that "magic time" and you can reconnect to a place where your teenager is right now.

Enjoy the last few days of summer vacation together!

Both having degrees in theater and having studied in Oxford and Paris respectively, Suzanne and Chris Shoemaker have worked as freelance artists and writers in England, Canada, France, China and Hawaii. They now call Los Angeles their home where they live with 3 three sons and 2 grandsons. They can be reached at suzanne@actsofcreation.com or chris2@actsofcreation.com.

HIS

Thunderbirds Are Go!, and so should your family to this exceedingly fun and retro action-packed adventure film.

Set in the year 2010, *Thunderbirds* introduces the world-saving Tracey family, led by billionaire and former astronaut Jeff Tracy. They are the family and force behind a crime stopping top-secret organization known as the International Rescue. Believe me, these are the type of guys with gadgets you wish you had for neighbors!

The Hood holds an old grudge against Jeff Tracy and takes over his South Pacific island headquarters in order to steal the incredible Thunderbird flying machines. With these machines, he plans to steal again, framing the Tracys with an international theft they did not commit.

Boasting over 680 eye-popping digital effects, *Thunderbirds* is fast paced, sparsely but intelligently scripted with a diverse and talented supporting cast.

Ever heard of an Aquabat? It's not a creature defined in any dictionary I know of. For me, the name conjures up an image of a nearly drowned bat in water - and you want to help. I never guessed what one was until my teenage son informed me that The Aquabats is one of the "raddest" ska bands on the face of the planet.

The origins of ska music reach back to a form of Jamaican dance music that leapt out of Jamaica in the early 1960's. Featuring plenty of drums, rhythm guitar, horns and saxophone, The Aquabats brand of ska makes you want to shake your body to the beat and relive teenage abandon. Best of all, their music is upbeat with positive-minded and wholesome lyrics.

We caught up with The Aquabats at 10th annual Van's Warped Tour in Ventura a few weeks ago. Billed as an alternative music event, the organizers reversed the notion of babysitting and actually had a tent named The Reverse Day Care Center, where teenagers dropped off their chaperoning ol' fogies to watch videos for the day. The Aquabats took to the stage, energized their young audience (thousands of under 25-year-olds and us!) and let their light-hearted antics begin.

More than just a group of musicians (guys in their 20s and 30s) playing music, The Aquabats play the on-stage roles of masked superheroes crossing the country and stomping out evil along the way. The show's theme of good vs. evil is clear-cut, as surprise villains unwittingly try to undo the show and do in our heroes.

According to the band's leader and founder, MC Bat Commander (like all bat-related men, their real names are protected), "There is a lot of mirth with what we do - we make fun of many things, along with ourselves! We appeal to that audience between adolescence and adulthood." Very articulate yet unassuming, the Commander adds, "We like taking the wind out of violence's sails. We say be smart, navigate life, be safe and have fun."

If you're looking for a first-time concert full of clean humor and dance happy music to attend with your teens, check out The Aquabats for their performance schedule at their cartoony-crafted website at www.theaquabats.com. Note: They have a cult-like following of over 5,000 Cadets (fans). Your kids might just start hanging out in underwater caves!

