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# 'Shorts' review

More kid stuff from Robert Rodriguez

By Geoff Berkshire

Metromix

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Critic's Rating: ★★★★★



Jimmy Bennett (Credit: Warner Bros.)



### Shorts

Running time: 89 minutes

Rated: PG

#### Cast:

Jon Cryer - Dad Thompson  
William H. Macy - Dr. Noseworthy  
Leslie Mann - Mom Thompson  
James Spader - Mr. Black  
Jimmy Bennett - Toe Thompson

[See full cast](#)

Director: Robert Rodriguez

Genre: Action, Adventure, Comedy, Fantasy

Official Movie Web Site: <http://shortsmovie.warnerbros.com/>

Movie Trailer:

Overall User Rating: ★★★★★ (5 ratings)

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A group of kids—including nerdy Toe (Jimmy Bennett), witchy Helvetica (Jolie Vanier), germophobe Nose (Jake Short) and adventurous Loogie (Trevor Gagnon)—in the suburban town of Black Falls discover a mysterious and powerful "rainbow rock" that makes wishes come true. Although they mostly use it for fun, they realize the rock's downside when it falls into the hands of adults, especially Helvetica's evil CEO father (James Spader).

**The buzz:** Filmmaker Robert Rodriguez regularly switches between violent, grown-up fare ("Planet Terror," "Once Upon a Time in Mexico") and kid-friendly action movies ("Spy Kids," "The Adventures of Sharkboy and Lavagirl"), making him unique among mainstream directors. As with "Sharkboy," the premise for "Shorts" was suggested by one of Rodriguez's sons, Rebel, who also has a supporting role as Loogie's brother Lug.

**The verdict:** No one can accuse Rodriguez of lacking energy or imagination, but "Shorts" is one of his more manic, less magical, efforts. Heavily inspired by "The Little Rascals," the movie has a creative structure—its storyline unfolds as a series of short films shown out of chronological order, almost like a junior "Pulp Fiction"—but the tales it tells aren't strong enough to stand on their own and, taken as a whole, don't add up to anything special. The shorts in "Shorts" feel rushed and cluttered, overdoing trite messages about the dangers of technology and coming up, well, short on actual adventure. At least a goofy throwaway chapter featuring Nose, his scientist father (a game William H. Macy) and a giant booger monster is dumb fun, making the best use of the movie's otherwise uninspired schoolyard gross-out humor. Decent filler for kids but too tedious for adults, Rodriguez already proved he can do better than this with the first two "Spy Kids."

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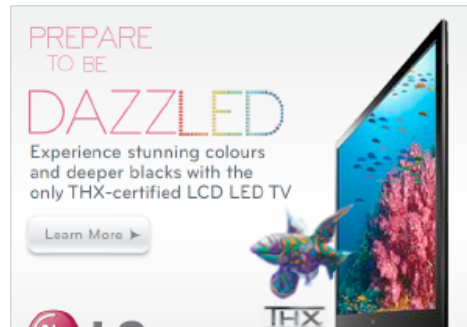


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**Did you know?** '80s teen movie fanatics might be excited to see Spader and Jon Cryer (as Toe's dad) share the screen for the first time since 1986's "Pretty in Pink." And yes, Spader's still the villain, and Cryer's still the wisecracking underdog.

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