

Netflix's 'The Adam Project' has a winning sci-fi formula

By Mark Meszoros
The News-Herald

Watch Walker Scobell for only a minute or so in "The Adam Project" and you'll be convinced he spent hours studying Ryan Reynolds in preparation for the movie.

In the consistently entertaining and relatively family-friendly sci-fi action romp — which plays like a cross between "Back to the Future" and "Big" and debuted on Netflix — the 13-year-old Scobell portrays the younger version of Reynolds' character, Adam Reed.

As Young Adam, Scobell has his older counterpart's speech cadence down and sounds like a chip off the sarcastic-but-charming block.

Apparently, the actor — who, according to the movie's production notes, had done little more than a middle-school play before cast — already had done the needed prep work for "The Adam Project." A huge fan of the "Deadpool" movies, which



Doane Gregory/Netflix/TNS
Walker Scobell, left, and Ryan Reynolds in "The Adam Project."

star Reynolds as the titular foul-mouthed, murderous antihero, Scobell apparently had memorized "Deadpool 2" by the time he was 11. (Given the content of those decidedly R-rated superhero romps, we may need to have a talk with his parents.)

"The Adam Project" begins by informing us via on-screen text that time travel is real but that we just don't know it yet. We then meet Reynolds' Adam in 2050, in the middle of a stressful situation. Big Adam is piloting a craft above earth's atmosphere we

will come to know as a "time jet." He's bleeding and confirms to a woman over the radio that he is, in fact, stealing it. As he's being fired upon by another craft, he opens a wormhole in space and flies through it.

We then cut to 2022, where we meet Young Adam.

"Adam!" yells another boy chasing him through a crowded school hallway. "I'm going to kill you!"

Seems Adam has always had a way with people.

Young Adam is a handful for

THE ADAM PROJECT

3 stars (out of 4)

MPAA rating: PG-13 (for violence/action, language and suggestive references)

Running time 1:46

Where to watch: On Netflix

his mom, Ellie (Jennifer Garner, "Love, Simon"), who's raising him alone since the accidental death a year or so ago of his father.

Upset with her son for now being suspended from school for fighting for the third time, she asks him why he's just taken on a schoolmate twice his size.

"EVERYONE is twice my size!" he says. "I've seen babies bigger than me!"

Not surprisingly, then, when he meets his future self — Big Adam, it turns out, has traveled back in time to 2022 and is hiding out in the family garage while he heals — he's pretty excited to see all the muscles he'll develop over the decades.

At first, of course, he doesn't know he's just met an older version of himself and threatens the visitor with a baseball bat.

"If I wanted to hurt you," Big

Adam says, "I'd have done it already. Because if I'm being honest with myself, you have a very punchable face."

It doesn't take long for Young Adam to piece together who this guy is, and he soon learns Big Adam needs his help in his all-important mission.

The adventure that follows involves more time travel and brings into the fold secondary characters portrayed by Zoe Saldana ("Star Trek"), Mark Ruffalo ("Avengers: Endgame") and Catherine Keener ("Capote").

"The Adam Project" is nicely directed by Shawn Levy, whose credits include 2003's "Cheaper by the Dozen," 2005's "Night at the Museum" and last year's "Free Guy," which also starred Reynolds. The two greatly enjoyed each other and sought out another project, landing on a script co-written by Jonathan Tropper, who saw his 2009 novel, "This Is Where I Leave You," adapted for the big screen by Levy in 2014.

Levy deserves a lot of credit for what works here, from the pacing down to a few well-placed classic-rock songs, including Led Zeppelin's "Good Times Bad Times."

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