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# Stars, Setting Sustain 'Panda Adventure'

## MOVIE REVIEW

By KEVIN THOMAS  
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**"T**he Amazing Panda Adventure" is a lively family entertainment in which two very capable young actors, Ryan Slater and Yi Ding, plus an irresistible panda cub, sustain pretty well some continuity glitches and credibility-straining moments. Its wilderness locations in China's Himalayan mountain highlands are also a real plus.

(The film, which opened Friday, was not screened in advance for critics by Warner Bros.)

Sturdy, poised Slater—yes, he's Christian's brother—plays a 10-year-old reluctantly going off to spend spring vacation with his workaholic, neglectful father (Stephen Lang), a naturalist specializing in the conservation of the beloved but highly endangered giant pandas at a reserve, which the Chinese government threatens to shut down imminently unless at least one baby panda turns up. A mother and child do surface, but the mother is wounded in a trap while Slater and the pretty Yi (who's helpfully fluent in English) find themselves on the run, the cub in tow, with the poachers in pursuit.

Writers Jeff Rothberg and Laurice Elehwany establish a credible relationship between the youngsters while piling on all the usual adventure movie incidents—the crumbling rope-and-plank bridge, the tumble into the rapids and over a waterfall and some literal cliff-hanging. Director Christopher Cain moves the film fast enough to paper over a certain aura of contrivance and over-familiarity in all these exploits. Rick Baker and the Cinovation Studios crew's panda



ANTHONY BANNISTER

Ryan Slater, with cub, in "The Amazing Panda Adventure": Lively family entertainment with the usual adventure movie incidents.

effects are absolutely undetectable, matching the actual animals perfectly.

Ironically, by the finish, Slater has scarcely spent any time, quality or otherwise, with his father, but at least he's gotten his attention at last—and an invitation to come back in the summer.

Playing with it is "Carrotblanca," a new Looney Tunes cartoon spoof of "Casablanca" in which Bugs Bunny takes the Humphrey Bogart role.

■ **MPAA rating: PG, for adventure action and brief mild language. Times**

**guidelines: The film is suitable for all ages.**

### 'The Amazing Panda Adventure'

Stephen Lang.....	Michael
Ryan Slater.....	Ryan
Yi Ding.....	Ling
Wang Fel.....	Chu

A Warner Bros. presentation. Director Christopher Cain. Producers Lee Rich, John Wilcox, Gary Foster and Dylan Sellers. Executive producer Gabriella Martinelli. Screenplay by Jeff Rothberg and Laurice Elehwany; from a story by Wilcox and Steven Alldredge. Cinematographer Jack N. Green. Panda effects Rick Baker and Cinovation Studios. Editor Jack Hofstra. Costumes Marjorie Chan. Music William Ross. Production designer John Willett. Art director Willie Heslop. Set decorators Doug Carnegie, Clive Thomasson. Running time: 1 hour, 25 minutes.

■ *In general release throughout Southern California.*