It’s hard to deny that in many ways, Super 8 is a very well-made film. That shouldn’t be a surprise, since director J.J. Abrams is no stranger to summer blockbusters and knows how to handle them inside and out. There’s a great, mysterious atmosphere to most of Super 8, and the action scenes—few though they are—are choreographed with style and energy. The script is carefully written and you can tell the story means something to the filmmakers. I don’t generally sing the praises of child actors, especially when they make up 75% of the main cast, but in this case it’s hard not to. Joel Courtney and Elle Fanning, the main leads, are especially good as the leads, playing a misfit boy and a somewhat eccentric girl whose bond over the course of a single, otherworldly summer slowly morphs into something approaching romance. It’s a story about kids and the world they live in, and how that world interacts with the one where adults dwell—and what happens when something alien (literally, in this case) intrudes upon both realms.

But for all its graces, and they are plentiful, Super 8 is tremendously disappointing. Not bad, mind you, but not as good as it should have been, either. The biggest problem is that, despite what the trailers and previews suggest, Super 8 isn’t scary. It’s really not even supposed to be. There are a couple of suspenseful moments, but they are brief and ultimately diluted by the generally saccharine plotline as a whole. I don’t want to go into details, since another virtue this film has is the air of mystery behind those ominous but ambiguous previews, but suffice it to say that the movie itself never delivers the chills promised by all those promotional shots of SOMETHING big and bad breaking out of a wrecked train in the darkness.

And then, despite the obvious care lavished upon the script, there are a lot of serious, even inexcusable, lapses in logic. Again, I don’t want to be too specific, but there are people who live through terrible catastrophes when there’s no possible way, while an entire town, for the most part, remains absurdly oblivious to what’s going on all around them. The military does play a big part in things, but they’re a pretty dense lot too, and when it comes down to it can’t even shoot straight. There are so many illogical moments that the suspension of disbelief becomes harder and harder as the plot unfolds.

If you’re thinking about seeing Super 8, don’t let me dissuade you. It’s not the worst movie you’re ever going to see, and at least it’s not in that abominable 3D. Just don’t expect the final product to live up to the trailers...if those previews have gotten you all worked up for a creepy creature feature, stay home and watch Cloverfield instead.