
Bronies: The Extremely Unexpected Adult Fans of My Little Pony (2012)

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Let me get this out of the way: [Bronies: The Extremely Unexpected Adult Fans of My Little Pony](#) is not a well-made documentary. The assembly is a mess, the storytelling is irritatingly self-indulgent, and the film is cut with a series of animated, expository songs that look and sound a bit too much like commercials for the overpriced merch available on the documentary's website. This is almost surely thanks to actor and *Bronies* chief architect [John de Lancie](#), previously known best for his turn as *Star Trek: The Next Generation*'s villainous Q, and now a Brony A-lister thanks to his voicing of Discord, a *My Little Pony* baddie. De Lancie is omnipresent in the film as a kind of Brony guide and *grand seigneur*, and, despite his priggishness, is adored by the Bronies — a testament to how eager these fans are to share their joy with pretty much anybody. Still, get past the washed-up egomaniac and the lousy filmmaking, and it turns out there's something to the Bronies.

To be clear, a “Brony” is a superfan of the latest *My Little Pony* iteration, subtitled *Friendship is Magic*. Commonly awkward and introverted, these guys are sensitive souls whose love of cartoon ponies is rarely the sole reason for the target on their backs. What the better moments in *Bronies* attempt to do is reveal the individuals, to get away from the common assumption that Bronies are creeps and pedophiles. The result is a movie about good-hearted nerds who happen to adore something weird. You and I may not understand their devotion, but every last one of these superfans seems to take away from the show exactly what the creator, [Lauren Faust](#), intended: The world would be a better place if people took better care of each other.



And there's the irony — in a story about (mostly) teenage men who spend their lives trying not to get in anybody's way lest they be called a *fag* for the umpteenth time, the central theme is simply, “be nicer.” The young men featured in *Bronies* are heartbreakingly sweet, looking only for quality time with other like-minded folks. Across the board, their thesis of Brony-hood is one of acceptance and community, and at its best the movie reminds you that there's nothing wrong with that, whatever it looks like. But alas, that's not the world we live in and *Bronies* will continue to be a punchline until the next thing comes along that's easy to laugh at. It's not necessarily that I blame people for reacting this way to something that is, on its face, patently absurd. The simple fact is that human beings need something to deride, to make them feel better about themselves — that's just the way it is. It is a shame though that the object of our derision is so often the people who have been gifted an excess of empathy. What does that say about us?

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