

Cars - The Must-See Movie of the Summer?

By *srlinuxx*

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Cars, the new animated feature from Disney/Pixar is cleaning up at the box office. The largest grosser of the summer... year so far is sure to see the first weekend numbers double before it's over.

I, and everyone else in my family, saw Cars this weekend and it delighted the young and amused the adults. It's wonderful.

This is the story of Lightning McQueen, a self-absorbed, a bit egotistical, nascar-style racing rookie. After the "Piston-Cup" deciding race, 3 cars tied for the win - an unprecedented occurrence that triggers a "run-off" or tie-breaker race across the country.



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As the Legend, Runner-up, and the Rookie take off to make their date with destiny, our hero Lightning finds himself lost in a world of self-discovery and life-changing encounters.

I love the casting. Owen Wilson is a very likeable character actor. Self-effacing, yet a bit cocky, this actor always brings a likeable vulnerability to his portrayals. This quality brings the animated character a full 3-dimensional aspect with which even the least of Nascar fans can relate. He learns the value of friendship over fame, feelings over success, and perhaps even love over everything. Owen Wilson makes one forget they are watching animation.

Veteran Paul Newman plays the older once-champion who finds himself in position of mentor. His character grows too as he learns a few life-lessons from the hero in return. Paul Newman is the ultimate professional and could make audiences cry in a completely dark theater. What more can you say? "Paul Newman" says it all.

Bonnie Hunt is another actor that no one can find a reason not to like. A veteran herself of many family pictures, she is the ultimate "mother next door." She does another excellent job of portraying the love interest in this movie. Played with sensitivity yet self-assured confidence, her character was probably touching the hearts of men and boys everywhere.

Micheal Keaton plays Chick Hicks, the over-confident and slightly morally challenged "win-at-all-costs" runner-up. He's been chasing the Legend's tailfin his whole career and hoped this year would bring the Piston Cup to his mantle. Micheal Keaton is one of those actors that can play the good guy or the bad guy in an equally impressive manner. He wasn't given the opportunity/screen-time to really evolve his character, yet it was a completely enjoyable portrayal.

Of course the main "Star" of this movie is the world created by those talented animators at Pixar. The whole world is created around and includes only cars. Every character and extra is a car. Even the buzzing flies are tiny cars. It's an absorbing and believable world. ...believe it or not.

Other big names to grace the screen are Cheech Marin as Ramon, George Carlin, Richard Petty as The King and Lynda Petty as Mrs. The King, Tony Shalhoub, Mario Andretti, Dale Earnhardt Jr, Bob Costas as announcer Bob Cutlass, John Ratzenberger, Jay Leno, and Edie McClurg.

This is one movie that's worth the price of admission, waiting long lines, and crackling on sticky floors. It's just a fun feel-good movie for adults and pure entertainment with a moral for youngsters. The only drawback is the commercialization-overload found in stores these days. I think that detracts from the quality and enjoyability of these features as it makes one wonder if the only goal is making some more billions. The quality of the picture tends to make one forget as you watch and almost convince you that the main goal was entertainment and craft.



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