

'Sonic the Hedgehog' won't make a lasting impression

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Rating: ««

out of «««««

Running Time:
99 minutes

Movies based around video games are a risky proposition. When *Pokemon: Detective Pikachu* serves as the most critic-friendly highlight in adaptations over the past few years, it means that enthusiasts have had to endure some less-than-stellar material. Recent examples include misfires like

Assassin's Creed, *Hitman: Agent 47*

and

Need for Speed. *Sonic the Hedgehog*

does its best to break the trend and make its mark with both audiences and reviewers, but this particular feature will only impress the youngest of viewers.

Sonic the Hedgehog (voiced by Ben Schwartz) is a blue-tinged, talking mammal from another world who possesses amazing powers of speed. Knowing that others will want him for study and experimentation, the hedgehog is advised to stay hidden and given magical rings that allow him to transport to other worlds. After settling in a small Montana community, the lonely protagonist finds life, well, a bit dull. It gets considerably more exciting when he accidentally draws the attention of sinister government agent Dr. Ivan Robotnik (Jim Carrey), who sets out to capture the creature.

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After losing his special rings, Sonic enlists the assistance of local sheriff Tom Wachowski (James Marsden) to help him retrieve them.

During the production phase, there was much public criticism about the look of Sonic, who many felt possessed too many strange anthropomorphic traits. The four-month release delay that was needed to create a new appearance for the lead character was no doubt an improvement and certainly looks less jarring, although cartoonish. However, one wishes that an extra few months had also been spent on the script. Almost all of the gags are aimed squarely at kids.

Some of the adult characters featured even behave like children (in particular, a deputy).

There is some amusing interplay which has partly been improvised between Robotnik and Tom. Certainly, Carrey is going wild in every scene in which he appears. While it isn’t hilarious, he manages to eke a few laughs out of the slim material. Especially at the beginning of the film, when the villain boasts about his intelligence and Tom fires a few verbal jabs in return.

In fact, these scenes make one wish that the human antagonist and male lead had more time onscreen together, as their material ends up being the funniest.

However, from this point forward it’s a road movie as Tom and Sonic attempt to avoid Robotnik and his drones by driving cross country to San Francisco. Many of you may be asking why Sonic doesn’t race out there himself - it is explained that he doesn’t know where to find the city (which doesn’t really make sense and is only an excuse to further the plot). Anyway, after a conversation comes up regarding bucket lists, the hedgehog realizes that he has little time left on the planet to enjoy certain experiences. This complicates matters and gets the two characters into further trouble along the way.

It all comes across as forced, and the gags involving Sonic being amazed by the world around him are routine.

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The movie features three major action scenes involving a barfight, a car chase and a climactic showdown. These bits offer the potential for some great visuals, especially with Sonic rushing around at incredible speed. It accomplishes this at times, when the camera follows the hero as he casually strolls around human beings who are practically frozen in time. They’re amusing bits, although they lack the grand panache displayed in other movies...the recent *X-Men* flicks featuring the zippy Quicksilver character get to show off his skills in far more impressive ways.

And that sums up the movie in general. It’s sweet, moves at a quick clip, has a couple of chuckles and one or two effects sequences that work reasonably well. Still, there’s hardly anything in it that will be remembered after the credits roll. In the end, *Sonic the Hedgehog* is a perfectly serviceable kid’s flick, but one that won’t make a lasting impression on anyone over the very youthful demographic that has been specifically targeted.

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