'Sonic the Hedgehog's' Nostalgia and Simplistic Story Provides An Enjoyable Experience

By **Murjani Rawls** - Feb 14, 2020

Photo Credit: Paramount Pictures

In 1991, those who picked up a Sega Genesis got acquainted with a blue, speedy hedgehog with a penchant for gold rings and peace signs. Where Nintendo had Super Mario, Sonic the Hedgehog became the mascot for Sega Genesis. The first trailer for the *Sonic the Hedgehog* movie was met with intense backlash over the character's redesign. Sonic sported a more human look that also came with human teeth. (The original game was only in 8-bit, but I don't remember Sonic with molars.) With that, the movie underwent an overall less than a year from release. Sonic looked more like the Sonic we remembered and thus, the movie could gain the proper momentum.

You might immediately be familiar with some concurrent themes and visual effects that are present throughout the film. In terms of plot, the feeling of having your gifts alienate you to some degree and ultimately, finding some semblance of family. Straightforward hero's journey stuff. The original game had the simplest objectives and confined the space in order for you to meet them. Director **Jeff Fowler** and writers **Pat Casey** and **Josh Miller** came together and kept

the formula simple. Sonic doesn't strive to reinvent his tale, but it serves to remind you why you fell in love with the game in the first place.

Sonic the Hedgehog (voiced by **Ben Schwartz**) makes his way into our world and heads into a town named Green Hills (just like the level from the first game) While he's alone, he either talks to himself or breaks the fourth wall. The audience becomes his shoulder to lean on. Schwartz's vocal performance is funny, engaging, and can hit the emotional beats when he needs to. Tom Wachowski (**James Marsden**) is the sheriff of Green Hills who is longing for bigger challenges outside the mundane range of small-town life. Both of their fates soon get intertwined and make their lives a lot more hectic.

Dr. Ivo "Eggman" Robotnik (**Jim Carrey**) serves as the eccentric and quirky antagonist trying to track down Sonic. If you're a fan of Carrey's comedic work from the '90s like *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective* or *Dumb and Dumber*, this is a welcome throwback. True to his last name, Ivo acts in a very emotionless fashion and is quick to throw his superior intellect in everyone's face. His character design invokes memories of the trademark red jumpsuit and thin sunglasses that Carrey uses to bring this character to life. This is a nice contrast to a movie that is mostly about heart and belonging.

Tom and Sonic's friendship blooms naturally as Mardsen plays more of the straight man role to the comedic stylings voiced by Schwartz. While Tom is searching for a bigger purpose, Sonic is just trying to find a place to belong. Both of these destinies meet up when Sonic finds himself in trouble. While the second act of the film does meander once we hit road trip territory, it quickly gets back to what makes the film great in the first place.

The beginning of a budding friendship and realizing what "home" could actually be are the sticking points to a very direct narrative. Tom's relationship with his supportive wife, Maddie Wachowski (**Tika Sumpter**), it further drives those points across. When all three characters are on screen together, it just feels right. They bounce off of each other like people learning how to be a family unit. Even though Sonic's character is a computer render, it doesn't feel like he's really out of place to the audience. It becomes a seamless fit. However, within the context of the world that he's in, it will be interesting how that may come up in a future sequel.

Fowler does a good job of adapting certain things from the video games into the movie's context. Sonic's rings and the use of drones by Robotnik come to mind. The action sequences

also show off Sonic's speed with the reminiscent blue blur. The movie does borrow pieces like Quiksilver's standout scenes from Fox's X-Men movies that may be a little too frequent. Composer **Tom Holkenborg** includes a thrilling soundtrack and even sprinkles in some old favorites from the video games themselves.

Video game adaptations throughout their history have had a very difficult time translating to the bigger screen. How do you take a story from one medium and translate it to have the same impact in a two-hour format? Books have done this because the reader has to use their imagination. With a Playstation or X Box, every crazy scenario you can think of is played out before you. As it's been proven over time, some games don't make for good films. It's hard to quantify 10-20 playtime into an almost two-hour format where someone is a spectator and not manipulating the action.

What Sonic the Hedgehog does is take the nostalgia factor and plugs that into both a simplistic and enjoyable formula. If you fell in love with the iterations of the game, there's enough here to rekindle that time frame for you. The movie will also serve as a gateway for younger fans to go down the treasure trove of Sonic lore as well.

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