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# Review: Toy Story 4

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## An existential nightmare (for kids!)

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There's an old adage within Pixar, that the prestigious animated studio wouldn't make sequels unless they had "better stories" than the originals. Ever since *Cars 2* followed up a homely and relatable classic with espionage plots and literal automobile torture, that adage hasn't held up. Pixar isn't the same company it was decades ago, at the very least internally, and with new faces and changing hands, *Toy Story 4* could be perceived as an attempt to get the story group's groove back.

This fourth film isn't as ambitious and bold as the 2010 film *Toy Story 3* was, but it didn't have to be. It's a fairly understated and low key sequel, a bit unexpected considering *Toy Story* is the studio's biggest title. *Toy Story 3* had a sense of finality, and this sequel that no one asked for, yet everyone will like anyway, is all about taking those first steps afterwards.



## ***Toy Story 4***

**Director:** Josh Cooley

**Release Date:** June 21, 2019

**Rated:** G

Have you ever wondered how toys become alive in the world of *Toy Story*? Surely, some group of Pixar employees must have had that philosophical debate, because that forms the inciting incident of this film. Determined to be of use for his new kid Bonnie, Woody (Tom Hanks) guides Bonnie in creating an arts-and-crafts "toy" named Forky (Tony Hale), a spork with pipe cleaner arms and googly eyes.

The result is terrifying. This is an unnatural being, an abomination, and Forky knows it too, repeatedly attempting to jump back into the trash heap from whence it came. But Woody, perhaps returning to his hubris from the first film, coaches Forky, Bonnie's beloved toy that helps her cope with her kindergarten-age social anxiety (we've all been there, Bonnie).

Bonnie's family and all of the toys go on a road trip, and since this is a *Toy Story* movie, things have to go south. Forky makes a run for it, and Woody's misadventure to rescue him (them? it?) leads to a run-in with the long-missing Bo Peep (Annie Potts). The rest of the movie takes place in only three locations: Bonnie's family rental RV, a carnival, and an antique shop right across the street, with the on-the-nose name "Second Chance Antique Shop."



As mentioned, the third film came out in 2010, two years before my first year of college, so I watched the newest film with very different eyes. The critic in me just couldn't stop thinking of parallels, metaphors, and philosophical musings from what is meant to be a darn family film.

For one, you have a bit of Woody and Buzz (Tim Allen) literally contemplating the nature of consciousness and inner voices (of course, this turns more into a gag for the kids). Then have the doll Gabby Gabby, a resident of the antique shop with a broken voice box and an entourage of creepy puppets essentially being a person with a birth defect seeking an organ transplant. Most importantly,

you have Bo Peep, who after moving on from a now-grown child and a dull stay at the antique shop, is now a "lost toy" traveling the area for "gigs" as a toy to different children for parties and short playground sessions and the like.

From that, there was a thought I just couldn't shake: was *Toy Story 4* a metaphor for committed relationships? Maybe not romantic relationships per se—I don't think Pixar was aiming to reimagine Bo Peep as a promiscuous swinger—but it does call to Woody's attention his purpose in life, and the inherited subservience that comes with being a toy. Does Woody need to go the distance for Bonnie, or any one child, especially when they'll never love him as much as Andy?



Before I started to have any semblance of an existential panic attack, Keanu Reeves showed up as a Canadian Evel Knievel ripoff. It turns out with being thoughtful and complex, *Toy Story 4* is also quite funny. Maybe there are a bit too many "sidekick" characters for my taste; take for example, Key and Peele's pair of fluffy toys who contribute nothing to the plot, but sidebar with time-padding gags.

The quantity of jokes and humor is about the same as *Toy Story 3*, and maybe a little less than the first two films. There isn't anything that goes too far and breaking the gravity of the world like say, Jack-Jack fighting a raccoon in *Incredibles 2*. At its worst, some scenes of action can be a bit too busy, with a second-act closer having far too many participants, a cat being one of them.

That's merely a nitpick, though. I occasionally have the worry of recent Pixar fare being more child-oriented and less so for the whole family, but there were plenty of moments that earned a laugh from me in the theater. One key moment even elicited a shocked gasp from the audience.



It wouldn't really be a Pixar movie, or a *Toy Story* movie specifically, without mentioning the crying. This is a strange selling point for a movie at this time—come see this film and expect to shed tears, or your money back! From my memory, this marketing angle goes all the way back to 2009's *Up* from Pixar, and continued the following year with *Toy Story 3*, with the final scene of Andy's farewell to Bonnie and the toys breaking down the audience into a weepy mess underneath their IMAX 3D glasses.

In that third movie, it wasn't that particular scene that got me, but one a bit before. Remember when all of the toys almost *died* from being incinerated as garbage? Remember how they all held hands, ready to accept their imminent doom? Perhaps it was my naïveté, but I actually thought that was the end.

*Toy Story 4* didn't need an extended montage at the end, or a giant, flaming incinerator to invoke responses. I won't spoil what the "cry" moment of this film for me was, but I will say that it captures the understated philosophy of 4. It is small, short, intimate, yet all the while as effective. Maybe 3 is the "better" movie from all of its **spectacle**—that and 2 would be the ones I rewatch the most. 4 proves that you can make someone feel even without that spectacle, and for that, the film is special in its own little way.



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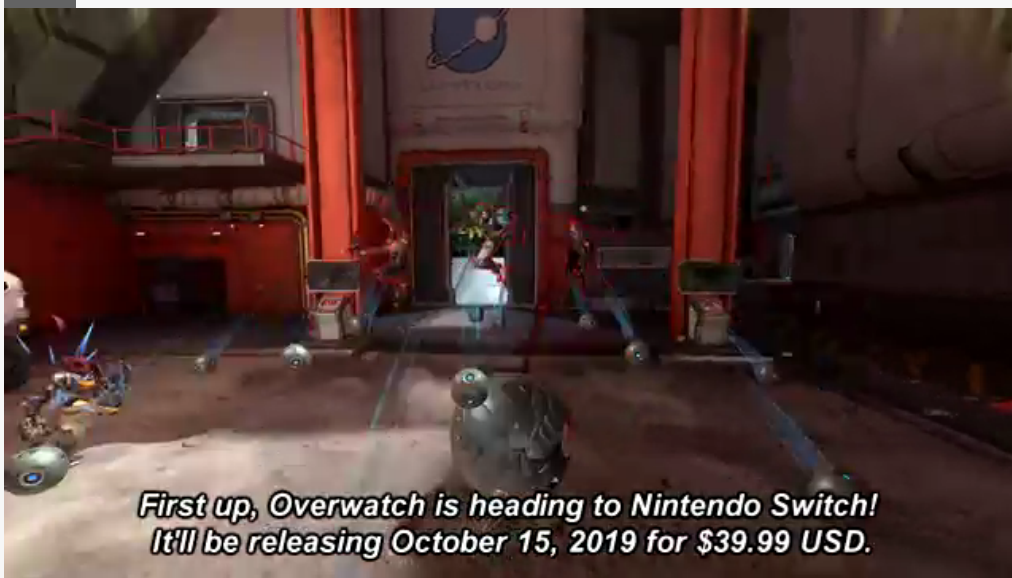


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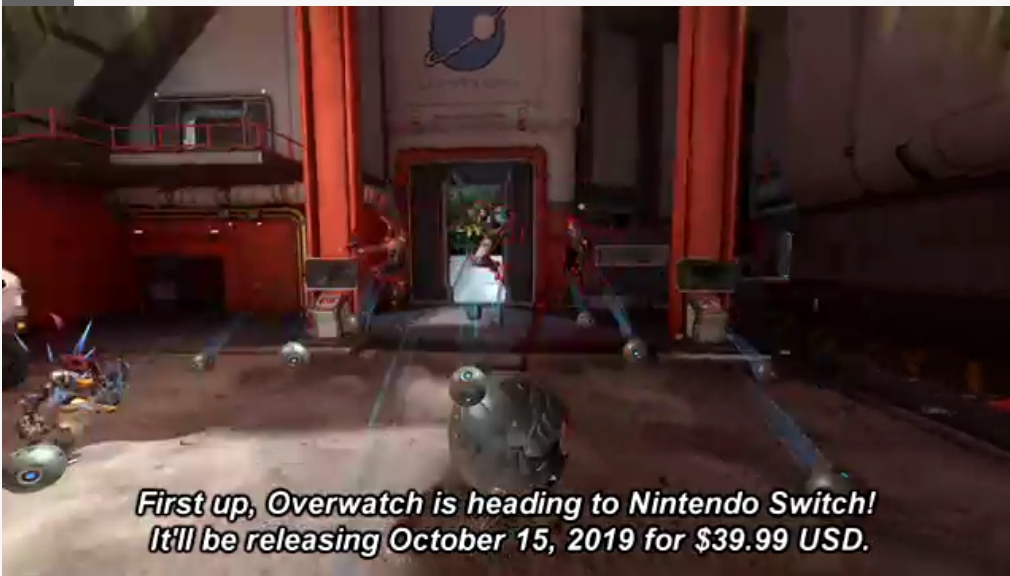
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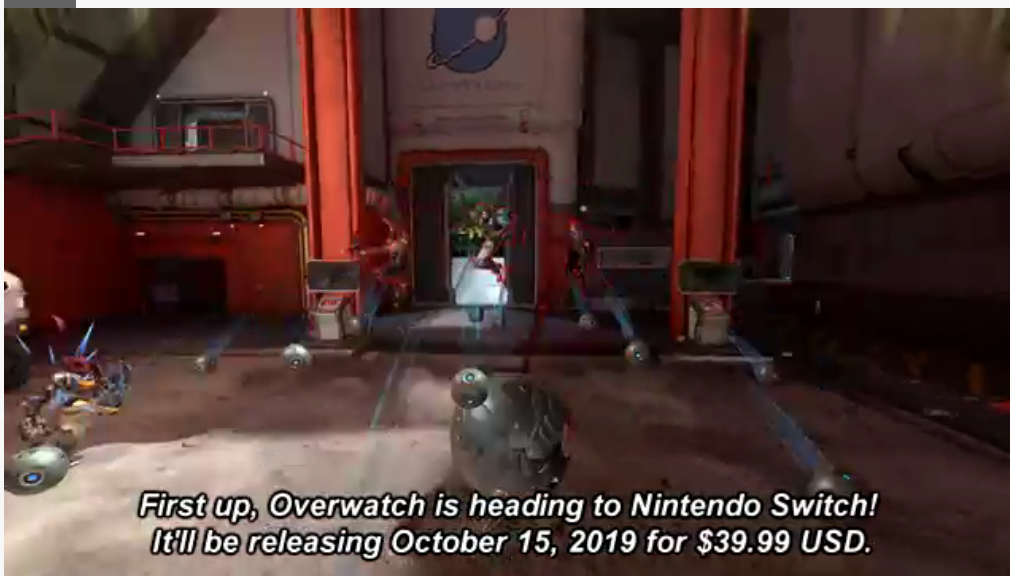
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## als launch for Marvel Disney+ shows, second season of *The Mandalorian*

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In an earnings call yesterday afternoon, Disney CEO Bob Iger revealed when fans can expect to see the company's upcoming slate of Disney+ shows. Pretty much everything is set to debut after the summer movie season, likely in an attempt to not cannibalize the ticket sales of Marvel's films this year. First up is *The Falcon and Winter Soldier* for August, followed by *The Mandalorian* Season Two in October, and rounded off with *WandaVision* in December.

Iger also stated that there will be much more *Mandalorian* coming after the second season. That could be hinting at spin-offs or possibly shorts, but the CEO didn't clarify. As well as that, Iger said that the *Star Wars* universe will be focusing on television productions in between now and whenever the next trilogy launches. Disney clearly isn't slowing down, even if "fans" are angry.

I kind of expected *WandaVision* to launch in December. The project was originally slated for 2021 and releasing it in December would still technically count as 2020. That's kind of a dick move, but I'd also

rather Disney take the time to make sure that show is solid. Same goes for *Loki*, which was conspicuously absent from this earnings call.

As for *The Mandalorian*, I have a feeling Disney is going to drive that series into the ground. Just call it a hunch, but Iger talking about "more" doesn't fill me with confidence.

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