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Review: Ralph Breaks the Internet

2018-11-21 09:30:00 by [Chris Compendio](#)

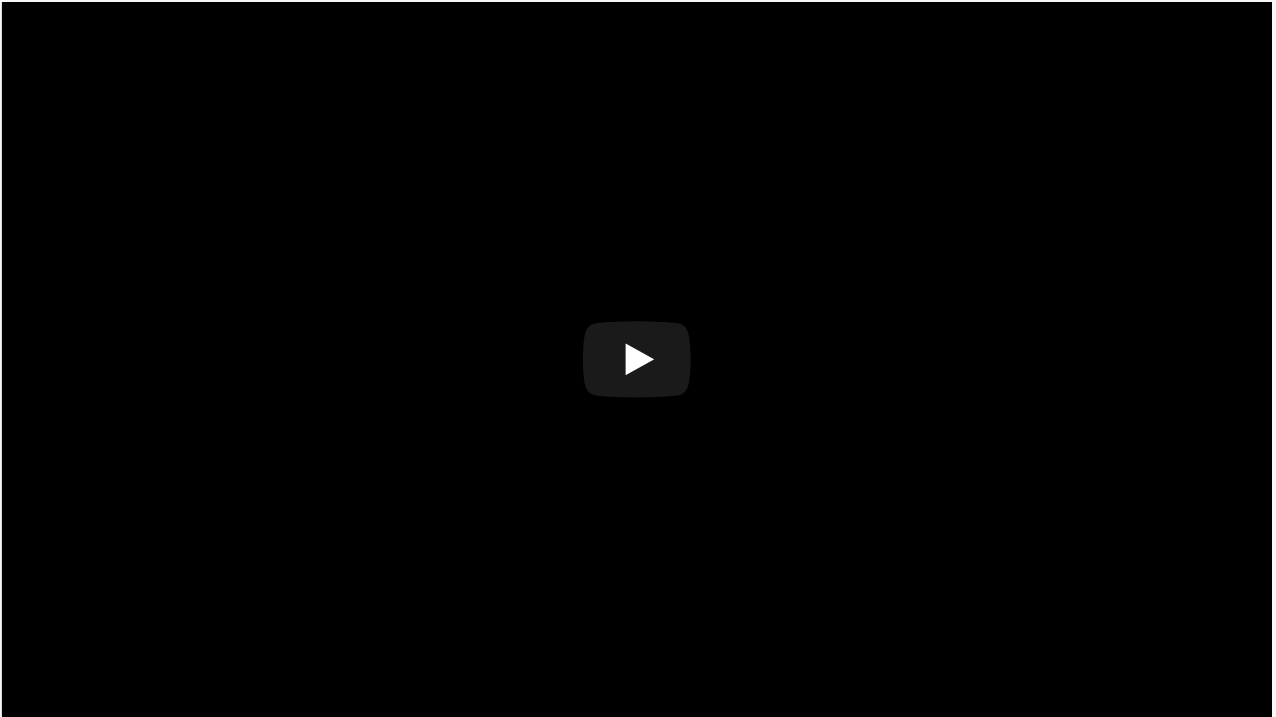
The deepest piece of media that also has the floss dance

45

There probably isn't a more recognizable movie formula than the one in Disney animated films. They take familiar stories, myths, and general concepts, create a light-hearted story with some basic virtues and life lessons, and probably throw in some musical numbers and dead parents. I've usually been lukewarm towards Disney's recent computer animated efforts, but I have to admit that *Wreck-It Ralph* won me over. I was definitely worried about the sequel, *Ralph Breaks the Internet*, yet somehow, somehow I ended up liking this film even more.

My worry before I actually sat down to see it was that it might not actually be about anything. While we're on the subject of basic virtues, the first movie was about having a sense of belonging and breaking out of your roles and habits, while also being a familiar tale of what it means to be a hero. Disney doesn't usually make theatrical animated sequels (most of those straight-to-video sequels and prequels are garbage and don't count), and from the trailers, I was afraid that this film would be a shallow effort to double as a Disney rendition of *Ready Player One*.

However, *Ralph Breaks the Internet* affected me emotionally at a similar level that many classic Disney animated movies do. The movie houses a really great story that has the potential to teach young, developing children how to deal with toxicity in close friendships.



Ralph Breaks the Internet

Director: Rich Moore and Phil Johnston

Release Date: November 21, 2018

Rating: PG

The friendship between Ralph (John C. Reilly) and Vanellope (Sarah Silverman) drives every single aspect of the film's plot. Six years after the first film, the two have reached a fun daily routine, but Vanellope is beginning to feel the repetition. Wanting to live up to his title as Vanellope's best friend and hero, Ralph attempts to make things better by building a new track in Vanellope's *Sugar Rush* arcade racing game, and while it is fun in the short term, Ralph's actions inadvertently cause the arcade game's steering wheel to break off, leading to the unplugging of the game and forcing all its inhabitants to abandon their home.

I was already surprised by how much I was able to chew on from the get-go. The well-written dialogue is able to convey a very real and relatable back-and-forth feeling about the monotony of daily life—Vanellope wants something new and fresh, but now without her game, she has no routine to depend anymore, leading to aimlessness and depression. Not to mention, the loss of the game is a very explicit metaphor for homelessness and unemployment.

And because Ralph sees himself as the best friend and hero, he takes Vanellope on a journey, via the arcade's newly installed wi-fi, and into the Internet in a quest to somehow retrieve a new steering wheel from eBay. Again, I held concerns—I was afraid that this would then turn into *The Emoji Movie*. Save for a few moments and some gripes, I was impressed.



As nice as they were in the first movie, I was happy that supporting characters Fix-It Felix (Jack McBrayer) and Calhoun (Jane Lynch) are sidelined for the most part. Nothing against those characters, but the fact that the film never cuts to their subplots and instead features either Ralph and/or Vanellope in nearly every single scene gives the film non-stop momentum. In their place are some new video game and internet-based supporting characters.

These new pals provide some fun personality quirks and vocal performances, with the cast of characters including Double Dan (Alfred Molina) as basically a spammer from the dark web, impulsive autocorrecting search engine KnowsMore (Alan Tudyk, a staple in modern Disney animated films), and BuzzTube (a fictional YouTube competitor) algorithm, Yesss (Taraji P. Henson). We also get a whole group from *Slaughter Race*, a grimdark, brown, fictional online racing game that felt like a cross between *Twisted Metal*, *Mad Max*, and the *Fast & Furious* films. Led by Shank (Gal Gadot), this game presents both a neat little car chase scene and an interesting story dilemma. Vanellope, wanting some variety in her life, is attracted to the freedom provided in *Slaughter Race*—not to mention that it's an online game that receives constant updates.

That aspect of comparing older arcade cabinets to evolving online video games is a clever tool in the film's depiction of the internet, but to be quite honest, the film isn't *that* creative with everything else. Interpreting the internet as a physical space sort of puts you in a corner, as everything will resort to the first, and probably only, idea. eBay is a space for auctions, Twitter is represented by bluebirds chirping out cat pictures on a large tree (and not by a giant cesspool of screaming people), Instagram is an art gallery, and so on. Product placement in films can be annoying, even if it does make sense in a movie like this. To nitpick, however, I was confused about why "BuzzTube" is used when YouTube is mentioned and seen in the film. But to give the film credit, *Ralph Breaks the Internet* gives the information superhighway (which along with "world wide web" was thankfully never said here) a nice, futuristic, clean, tactile feel—the ideas may not be original, but at least everything looks nice.

To summarize that part, it's more literal in an *Osmosis Jones*-sense and less abstract and wild like *Inside Out*.



I do wish, though, that the film spent more time dealing with internet toxicity and cyberbullying, as this film is an opportunity to impart life lessons about those issues to children. Of course, I didn't expect the film to depict Reddit, 4chan, or any civil discourse you would see on social media, and there definitely weren't any references to porn here (unless I missed something super subtle—Disney can do this sometimes). Besides a really, really, brief scene involving a BuzzTube comment section (the virtue taught here was "don't read the comments section" and "only care what your friends think"), *Ralph Breaks the Internet* totally dodges online negativity. In this bright metropolis of the internet, there are no dark alleys in between, and no skeletons in the closet from real-life problematic online institutions.

The film has an extremely optimistic and utopian view on the internet—seeing it through the eyes of Ralph and Vanellope makes it seem new and magical, where all your needs are met. While I wish that the film took some more responsibility in reminding kids that there are bad things online that aren't just in the "deep web," I also get that Disney probably wouldn't want scenes with Neo-Nazis yelling on Twitter or an Alex Jones parody on BuzzTube, or whatever. Instead, what we get are numerous references and jokes about online memes. Your mileage will vary with these—I found some gags to be quite funny, while I imagine that people will cringe at others. I heard some people groan when Yesss showed a BuzzTube clip that showed a split second of a *Fortnite* battle bus. And yes, Ralph flosses in one scene. With so many mentions of cat videos, the film feels like a collection of every joke from and about the internet from the past decade, now in a mainstream Disney film.

Speaking of Disney films and references, there isn't too much to talk about the "Disney fansite" sequence in *Ralph Breaks the Internet*, since, despite being a focus in trailers, it takes up so little screen time in the film itself. It's relatively inoffensive, and fans of *Star Wars*, the MCU, and Pixar will perhaps get a small chuckle and smile from the handful of jokes these universes present. The musical score by Henry Jackman actually blends in musical themes and styles from these other properties quite well during key moments. The Disney Princesses scene is a fun watch, albeit one spoiled by trailers already, like the moment where these princesses (almost all of them voiced by their original voice actresses) basically deconstruct the gender roles, tropes, and story formula of classic Disney films. Way to stick it to yourself, Disney? While the scene felt out of place at first, they do give Vanellope some essential advice that drives her motivation for the rest of the story.



And that brings us back to the main theme of the film. Amidst all of the internet nonsense, the very core of the story, as mentioned, is the friendship between Ralph and Vanellope. They are of course already best buds after the end of the first film, but their relationship is challenged by a very real and relatable scenario. Ralph is comfortable with the routine of the old arcade while Vanellope wants to break out into something new. What happens when two friends have these conflicting feelings? Is Ralph, as the best friend and Vanellope's "hero" entitled to anything from her?

Without giving too much away about the final act, the film cleverly tackles mental health in close, interpersonal relationships, namely the insecurity of individuals that hamper these relationships. This insecurity may cause one of the parties to force security, trapping the other into staying in the friendship—which as y'all should know, is unhealthy and bad. Conflicting desires eventually lead to sabotage, but thankfully, the film veers away from any of the characters straight-up gaslighting each other. The story also utilizes Vanellope's chronic "glitching" in an interesting thematic way—I always thought that it was a metaphor for disability in the first film, but when the theme of insecurity arrives in the second film, it turns more into a metaphor for anxiety. And no, I'm not looking too much into a "kid's movie," because the characters literally talk about most of this stuff. I really appreciated how the film handled this, and without airing out my personal history for the sake of your sanity, I wish I had it when I was a kid.

What results is a Disney film that slightly differs by having its virtues about the micro rather than the macro—*Ralph Breaks the Internet* doesn't have much to say about the internet, and by extension, society at large. It isn't about conformity, acceptance, or the like, but rather just about how two people can be respectful and friendly towards each other. While many references may not age well, the universal personal themes will remain timeless. *Ralph Breaks the Internet* won't make everyone laugh out loud constantly (dare I say "lol" in a professional review), but audiences may be surprised by how deep it is by the end. Just prepare yourself for when the movie turns from "ha, the internet is so weird and quirky!" into a group therapy session.



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8.5
GREAT

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Chris Compendio is one too many Chris's (Chrises?) writing for Flixist and Destructoid. They are a massive MCU fan who also writes and podcasts for Marvel News Desk, and a Nintendo fanatic who wr... [more + disclosures](#)

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Octoberfleshed1 · a year ago · edited

I'm glad this is a Toy Story 2 situation, where the sequel to an already great movie is enjoyable.

10 ^ | v · Share



Snycher · a year ago · edited

I fucking LOVED it!!!!!!! Definitely a worthy sequel. That last act though....I don't wanna ruin it but damn was that unexpected. Really glad the Internet shtick wasn't as overbearing as the trailers made it seem. Very moving, may have teared up a few times. Video games still a large focus (thank god). The princesses were great! So happy it was good!!! The overall message of the movie too? Just wow. Very well portrayed and important.

Honestly, not sure why I was so worried in hindsight. It was a Disney animated sequel (theatrical release) to one of their most popular movies.

7 ^ | v · Share



Ragnar Dragonfyre → Snycher · a year ago · edited

I was re-watching the original the other day and the part where Ralph tries to sacrifice himself moves me to tears every single time. I'm getting soft in my old age.

Glad to hear there's still a big focus on video games. I was afraid the video game theme would be lost amidst the general Internet themes and Disney cameos.

6 ^ | v · Share



Snycher → Ragnar Dragonfyre · a year ago · edited

I was too. Very much so. I just enjoyed it so much. As an adult that's dealt with toxic friendships and having to deal with friends and myself growing as people, possible growing apart. Learning how to work through it etc.. It was just so well done. I may have even liked it more than Incredibles 2.....

3 ^ | v · Share



Ragnar Dragonfyre → Snycher · a year ago

Wow. That's a bold statement.

I thought Incredibles 2 was better than the original, so that's a really good endorsement for me.

3 ^ | v · Share



Snycher → Ragnar Dragonfyre · a year ago

It is bold. It was the messages in the movie, man. Some very real shit I'm currently dealing with (friends growing apart, especially as an adult, and working on those friendships) and have just dealt with (removing toxic friends). I personally was just able to relate to them very well. Even though I knew what the ending would be (mostly), I still got anxiety thinking that maybe it wouldn't.

Its hard to say anything without spoiling parts, but everything is handled so well. I don't usually suggest movies, but I definitely suggest WiR2.

1 ^ | v · Share



The Average Guy → Snycher · a year ago

"Honestly, not sure why I was so worried in hindsight."



see more

4 ^ | v · Share ›



Benderisgreat · a year ago

If that racing game were really grimdark, the racers would have people hardwired into them, at least 3 would have green skin, and somebody would be shouting about an Emprah.

2 ^ | v · Share ›



YukaTakeuchiFan → Benderisgreat · a year ago

And the red vehicles would likely get banned at tournaments.

3 ^ | v · Share ›



MaddogExplosive · a year ago

No score? Does a review even have meaning if you don't attach a sterile number to the end of it?!

2 ^ | v · Share ›



Matthew Razak → MaddogExplosive · a year ago

Do not panic, readers! We have added a score, and only a few people have died due to the fact that it was missing. We apologize to the city of Cleveland for the destruction caused in and around the Brown's football stadium, but, I mean, they weren't really playing anything one would call football in it anyway. Also, to the people of the planet Virniat, we apologize that yours was the planet sacrificed because of our mistake.

8 ^ | v · Share ›



Zer0t0nin → Matthew Razak · a year ago

Seriously tho: why are Nine Inch Nails the only good thing out of Cleveland?

^ | v · Share ›



Khalid Eternal Nigh → Zer0t0nin · a year ago

ahem.



see more

^ | v · Share ›



rokNrolenemyNo1 → Zer0t0nin · a year ago

Lol, you mean aside from punk rock?

^ | v · Share ›



Perro → MaddogExplosive · a year ago

Because there's no score I don't even know if the movie's good or not

5 ^ | v · Share ›



Zer0t0nin → Perro · a year ago

Shiet, just imagine having to actually read the text and put its contents in relation to your tastes. WHO GOT TIME FO DAT?

2 ^ | v · Share ›



mix → MaddogExplosive · a year ago

Well he did break the internet...

3 ^ | v · Share ›



SourPatchParent · a year ago

I'm glad with the route they chose to go with in the ending, no spoilers, but I could have easily saw it going it the other way with other animated projects going that way. The ending was a mature and adult resolution to the situation.

1 ^ | v · Share ›



Snycher · a year ago · edited

I gotta say, very surprised not a single Kingdom Hearts cameo at all. I kinda half expected it really.

1 ^ | v · Share ›



BromegaSupreme · a year ago

I enjoyed it. Better than the first movie...

^ | v · Share ›



HawkLeo · a year ago

Ticket already got and on Saturday Night! Woohoo~~~~

^ | v · Share ›



RogueMephilesClone · a year ago

...Huh. All signs seemed to be pointing to a cringey and mediocre movie that I had to watch for a Sonic cameo. I guess... the trailers told us nothing?

Yeah, that can happen. I'll try to see it soon.

^ | v · Share ›



Ragnar Dragonfyre → RogueMephilesClone · a year ago

What is it like to have no soul?

1 ^ | v · Share ›



RogueMephilesClone → Ragnar Dragonfyre · a year ago · edited

???

Well, I guess it feels like the urge to play Sonic Adventure again.

This review is just the first promise of writing quality I've seen for the movie. I was also bummed out that it was moving away from video games, cuz' that was the whole reason I watched the first film. I'll go into it with an open mind now.

^ | v · Share ›



Siegfried Zeon · a year ago

I was under the impression that World Wide Web, while a little silly, was the actual official term for pretty much every aspect of the internet that relies on a browser. It even has a standards body(W3C). Surely it's not equated with bullshit terms like information superhighway or cyberspace is it?

^ | v · Share ›



indigit4l → Siegfried Zeon · a year ago

www is like.. websites. There's other iterations, some providing specific functions.. FTP, file transfer protocol, POP, email, Gopher.. that was a challenger to HTTP/WWW. IRC! Internet Relay Chat. Pretty much everything took a backseat to WWW since the early mid 90s when people were talking about these other things.

1 ^ | v · Share ›



Gus TT Showbiz · a year ago

Since there's no arbitrary score attached it looks like this review is...Wrecked.

^ | v · Share ›



Octoberfleshed1 → Gus TT Showbiz · a year ago

He must have just added it, because it's an 8.5.

^ | v · Share ›



AtomicBanana → Octoberfleshed1 · a year ago

MOAR LIKE HATE-POINT-FIVE

oh God I'm so old...

2 ^ | v · Share ›



Octoberfleshed1 → AtomicBanana · a year ago

I'm old too, I remember that meme. People really did act like 8.5 was a bad score for a little while.

2 ^ | v · Share ›



Kris Coffin · a year ago

Interesting how the current social commentary slipped into this movie in full force. There is no strong male leads in this at all. All the men are bumbling idiots and every position of power is held by a woman or girl. So much so that Ralph is at the core of things the main antagonist and his moronic behavior and insecurities are literally the enemy.

^ | v 1 · Share ›



Minos · a year ago

Why are all those girls so happy to take a selfie with a mass murderer?

^ | v 1 · Share ›



Popyman · a year ago

The first one was one of the biggest dissappointments I've ever had with a movie. This one sounds better but I don't know if I want to support them moving even further from what I wanted out of the original concept.

^ | v 2 · Share ›



Ragnar Dragonfyre → Popyman · a year ago

Why were you disappointed in the original?

1 ^ | v · Share ›



Popyman → Ragnar Dragonfyre · a year ago

The second half. Hated that there were more candy references than video game ones. I wanted a celebration of video games and Wreck It Ralph was not that.

^ | v 1 · Share ›



SetToJetPodcast → Popyman · a year ago

It was kind of telling that in Japan the movie was just called "Sugar Rush" considering that 2/3rds of the movie takes place in that one game.

1 ^ | v · Share ›



Peter Glagowski → SetToJetPodcast · a year ago

But the film was titled Wreck-It Ralph. It wasn't ever misleading as it focused on Ralph. Video games were just the backdrop of the story.

3 ^ | v · Share ›



Ragnar Dragonfyre → Popyman · a year ago

Huh... that's strange.

I guess I must have been watching a different movie because the Mario Kart references in Sugar Rush were great.

Wrapping it all up in a candy theme doesn't change that for me. The video game references were persistent throughout the entire film.

If you were disappointed that there weren't enough famous cameos, then that's a different discussion entirely. Disney doesn't have full access and control over other IPs to do with as they will in a movie about video games. I think we were lucky to get the cameos that we did.

^ | v · Share ›



Popyman → Ragnar Dragonfyre · a year ago

The movie we ended up getting was cobbled together. They had a really good original story where it's just Ralph and Felix on a journey together through tons of video games. But somewhere along the way they had another writer come on (the one that also did the same exact thing to Frozen) and changed everything. The way I see it, the candy stuff and Turbo and everything was supposed to be in a sequel. But she crammed it all into one story and killed the original vision.

1 ^ | v · Share ›



Shinkz · a year ago

The inclusion of Gal Gadot and the Disney Princesses completely killed any excitement for the movie for me.

^ | v 4 · Share ›



GoToHellDieDieDie → Shinkz · a year ago

I take you are not fond on Gal Gadot...

2 ^ | v · Share ›



Brimfyre → Shinkz · a year ago

So you hate women?

1 ^ | v 2 · Share ›



Syz → Brimfyre · a year ago

I think he might just hate Gal Gadot and Disney Princesses.

1 ^ | v · Share ›



Clenchmask → Shinkz · a year ago

Okay.

^ | v · Share ›



Zer0t0nin → Shinkz · a year ago

How so?

^ | v · Share ›

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