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# TV The Journal view



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## Titus unleashes star-spangled comic rant in 'Neverlution'

"Christopher Titus: Neverlution"  
airs Sunday on Comedy Central.

See Page 4 for more details.



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# Double Take: "Cars 2"

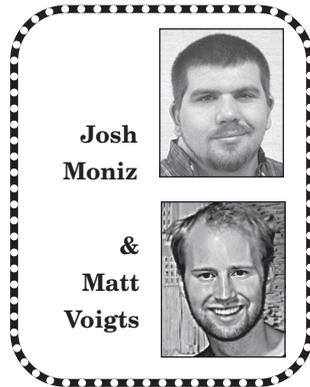
**Josh: "Cars 2" sputters out with no gas  
Matt: It's not bad, I'm just disappointed**

**Josh:** We should hold a minute of silence for Pixar, because it has finally made a bad film. It's not an unwatchable film, but compared to everything else the studio has produced, it's a real let down.

My gut feeling is this film falls flat because there was no strong desire among the Pixar crew to actually make it. The people at Pixar usually don't make a film until find an idea they're actually excited to show the audience. This film was only made to cash-in on the profitable "Cars" franchise, no doubt with strong push from parent company Disney.

There's still stuff to enjoy in this film. The animation is still amazing and there's plenty of funny jokes. The film's two plots — one is "Cars" on a global scale and the other is a Bond film with cars as the people — are independently decent ideas.

Where it breaks down is when they are unnecessarily crammed together, and when the "Cars" char-

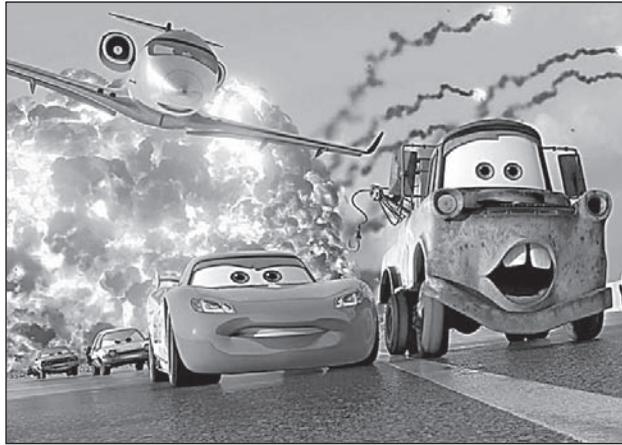


Josh  
Moniz

&  
Matt  
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acters are then further shoved into the resulting mess. The first "Cars" was an alright Pixar film that got the feeling of small town values right without being condescending, which is tough to do right. This film takes all the characters away from that, which is the only thing it really had going for it. Even the main character from the first film, McQueen, has nothing to do in the film for 90 percent of it. The result is the two OK ideas, which would have been better as independent shorts, are needlessly mangled to fit the old characters in. This makes the film sloppy, boring and less interesting.

I think that most damning point about this movie is the few funny bits, like all cartoony jabs at Japanese culture, are not derived from the plot. Nothing about the plot is very funny or interesting. If they had go full bore with making a 007-with-car people film, I'm not con-



The stuff in this picture only happens in less than half of "Cars 2," and in a less cool way.

vinced it would be that great. This film is only half of that hypothetical film, with an even less interesting film rammed down its throat.

**Matt:** \$5 billion — that's the estimated take of the first "Cars" movie, the vast majority of which comes not directly from tickets or DVDs, but from merchandising sales: T-shirts, toy cars, video games, toy cars, and more toy cars. You can't sell plush rats and old men in balloon houses like you can toy cars — which, of course, why we have "Cars 2" and not something new and more interesting and unique.

That, and the fact that driving those sales is how much the movie resonated with the under-8 set, if my friends' children are a representative sample. I gen-

uinely respect that sort of connection, but must note that this demographic also laughed the hardest at two fart jokes (one in the coming attractions) during our evening at the theater.

This is not to say the movie isn't entirely worthwhile, or that you won't enjoy it along with your kids. It is, arguably, Pixar's most visually complex movie — the opening spy shenanigans take place on a cluster of oil rigs with lighting and depth beyond anything I've seen in CGI. For all the spy stuff, the parody is strictly generic, with no Shrek-style pop culture name-dropping. I enjoyed it more than I thought I would and overall, "Cars 2" is more or less an affable movie. But I could describe most of Pixar's movies as "affable," and that hasn't stopped "Up" and "Toy

Story 3" from playing like gangbusters with the kids while including an impressive emotional depth and resonance.

Instead, "Cars 2" does something Pixar hadn't yet stooped to do: it panders. Where other Pixar films strive for uniqueness in tone and characterization, "Cars 2" is all genre elements and stock characters. Stated themes like "all the money in the world won't make you happy" strike a hypocritical tone given how little they are developed, their triteness, and the franchise's profitability. And while Pixar does know something about how to use Larry the Cable Guy tolerably, be warned: Mater's story (cribbed directly from the 1997 Bill Murray vehicle "The Man Who Knew Too Little") takes up the bulk of screen time. As for my opinion of Larry the Cable Guy, Google his name, "open letter," and "David Cross."

**Josh:** Well, the honeymoon can't last forever and Pixar has finally let its audience down. Here's to hoping that this is just a forgettable mistake that reflect the film industry's economic realities, and that there are plenty more great films to come.

**Matt:** While overall enjoyable, "Cars 2" displays the Dreamworks ethos — an afterthought plot

mapped onto shiny visuals designed to manufacture desire in your younglings so you spend money. This has also, of course, been the Disney ethos as of late. One of the interesting things about Pixar movies has been the push and pull between their artistic and social integrity ("Wall-E" and its save-the-environment message) and Disney's milk-every-dollar bottom line (buy a cheap plastic, landfill-clogging Wall-E watch!). "Cars 2" marks the first time the pendulum has officially swung toward the corporate, and the effect is disillusioning.

**Josh: 4/10, Matt: 6/10**

## Synopsis:

Race car Lightning McQueen takes the whole gang with him to an international racing competition, where he is set on beating a snooty Italian race car. Meanwhile, tow truck Mater is mistaken for a spy and must save the day.

Starring: Larry the Cable Guy, Owen Wilson, Michael Cain, Eddie Izzard, John Turturro and Emily Mortimer

Director: John Lasseter and Brad Lewis  
Writer: Ben Queen

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