



TRANSCRIPT

Cinema

Film Review - Wall-E

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In this segment I will talk about the recently-released and much-publicised animated movie *Wall-E*. Let me say at the outset that feature-length animated movies are not my cup of tea. These days I will usually only bother with them in order to spend time with my grandchildren.

Part of my reluctance to watch animated movies probably stems from my own childhood when I was, quite literally, scared off them after being taken along with my very young schoolmates by a misguided teacher who thought that Walt Disney's *Fantasia* would be fun for kids. I discovered that *Fantasia* is one of the most nightmarish horror flicks ever devised. I wouldn't even want to put myself through it again at my current advanced age let alone expose a child of eight or nine to its unrelenting terrors.

The other celebrated early Disney movies were also inevitably laden with scary sequences. Think of the terrifying step-mother in *Snow White* and the awful misery of *Bambi*. And what about *Pinocchio's* ever-lengthening nose? Cautionary tales don't come with much more caution attached than that one!

Added to all of this I guess I have always found animated movies to be rather flat and lifeless. On screen I much prefer to watch real people doing extraordinary things. So it was with some reluctance that I went along with my grandchildren to see a movie called *WALL-E*.

Surprisingly I probably liked it more than they did. They found it rather dull and slow-moving and the storyline failed to engage their interest. However, for my part, I could appreciate that the animation technology was superb, the characters well-developed, and the underlying message – a plea to save the earth from the consequences of garbage pollution – was motherhood-worthy.

The other aspect of the movie which my grandchildren probably failed to connect with because of their tender years is that, at its heart, *Wall-E* is a love story. The difference is that in this case the lovers – Wall-E and EVE are robots. Their names are acronyms – Wall-E is short for Waste Allocation Load Lifter Earth Class and EVE stands for Extra Terrestrial Vegetation Evaluator.

Wall-E is a cute but somewhat battered little front-end loader which has been programmed to clean up the garbage-littered planet. He's been cheerfully going about his solar-powered work for 700 years – building skyscrapers of compressed packages of junk. Over time, all of the other machines allocated to junk removal have ceased to function and, as the movie opens, we find Wall-E working at his task all alone.

He's so lonely that he is pleased to find another moving object and befriend it – even though it's just a cockroach.

Then a space probe arrives and out pops EVE. She's been sent to the devastated Earth to see if anything is able to grow there. EVE is the polar opposite of the work-weary Wall-E. She's sleek and shiny-white, and her sensors look like big blue eyes.

Wall-E is instantly smitten but EVE has a task to perform and Wall-E will find out that the path of true love is a rocky one.

And, oh my goodness, it's sooo long! And that's my major complaint about *Wall-E* the movie. With a duration of even one hour and thirty-seven minutes – quite brief by most movie standards – it's just too long for the story to sustain. Production house Pixar have had a lot of hits in recent years including *Finding Nemo*, *Ratatouille* and *Cars* – but, despite the tidal wave of publicity and promotion, I don't think *Wall-E* will have the DVD longevity of these favourites.

In the theatre where we saw *Wall-E* a short Pixar cartoon started the program. It was a real cartoon, probably about seven or eight minutes in duration, in the *Tom and Jerry* tradition. It was about the rabbit who normally inhabits a magician's hat. The rabbit is hungry – desperate for a carrot – but the magician has neglected to feed him. So the rabbit turns the tables on the magician and, along with refusing to appear out of the hat when required, creates a series of ingenious – and very funny – situations, which turn the magician's act into a farce.

It's a delightful piece of wonderful carton fun. After the show my grandchildren said they enjoyed the cartoon more than the main feature. I agreed with them. I gave the cartoon five stars and I gave *Wall-E* two and half stars because its heart was in the right place.

Bye for now. I'll see you in the back stalls.

John J McGowan

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