

Sonic the Hedgehog (2020)



Sonic and his new friend are up against a mad scientist wanting to experiment on the little creature. (c) Paramount Pictures

Given its video game origin, I was prepared to dislike this live action/CGI blockbuster (as I write this it's the top grossing film). However, within five minutes I was won over, primarily by the wit of its two scriptwriters, Pat Casey and Josh "Worm" Miller. Along with its zany action, which the kids will love, there are plenty of funny lines.

The film begins in the midst of a wild chase through San Francisco, the evil mustachioed Dr. Robotnik chasing a bright blue hedgehog named Sonic because the villain wants to experiment on the little creature in order to gain his superpower and speed. Breaking the fourth wall, Sonic addresses us, "So why am I, an incredibly handsome boy in blue, being chased by a creep in a Civil War mustache? Well, let's say I've been running all my life. Am I going too fast? It's what I do. Let's go back!" Quick rewind of film to Sonic's childhood, and then the story progresses toward the present.

We learn that Sonic has come to Earth via his magic gold video-game rings to escape his past. He is incredibly fast and can tap into vast power, hence the later attempt of the mad scientist to capture him. The hedgehog settles into a cave

close to Green Hills, a small Montana town. Guess what his favorite comic book is—yes, it's DC Comic's *Flash*. If they had equipped the cave with a TV, I suppose we'd see scenes from the old Roadrunner cartoon shorts.

Watching over the safety of Green Hills' citizens is the slightly goofy but likeable sheriff's deputy [Tom Wachowski](#) (James Marsden). True to the cop stereotype, he loves donuts, so when Sonic first lays eyes on him, he dubs him "Donut Lord." Tom is preparing to move up to what he hopes will be a more exciting position on the San Francisco Police force. His wife Maddie (Tika Sumpter), the town's veterinarian, gamely agrees to the move, though it's obvious she thinks he is overlooking a lot of good things about their unexciting but loving town. (This is a male-oriented film, so nothing is made of the many ties she must have through her profession with the people and the animals that she has treated.)

Sonic moves so fast that he can play ping pong or even baseball by himself. One night he plays the latter, so quick moving that he is batter, pitcher, and fielder, sliding across home plate barely in time to call it "safe" from the ball that he had thrown from the outfield. But by himself he cannot be a team that offers companionship, so he wistfully says, "I really am alone. All alone. For ever." In this respect he is very much like the psalmist, alone at night and unable to sleep.

Alone forever. No, not really! When he throws a funk that causes a power outage all over the Northwest, the government decides to send out tech genius [Dr. Ivo Robotnik](#) (Jim Carrey, stealing every scene he's in!) to investigate. He is so full of himself that he makes Donald Trump seem like one of the meek destined to inherit the earth. And so, the chase, or rather, a series of them, is on, everyone involved eventually winding up in San Francisco.

There can be no doubt that this is a 99-minute commercial for

the SeGo company, and yet millions of folks have been persuaded to spend big bucks (I am so thankful my children are grown!), making the film a huge box office success. They will no doubt be entertained—as mentioned, the script has lots of funny lines, most of which eight-year-olds, the median age of its intended audience, will miss. Some samples:

When Dr. Robotnik first meets the military officers who have summoned him, he arrogantly tells them, “I’M IN CHARGE!”, explaining, “Allow me to clarify. In a sequentially ranked hierarchy based on level of critical importance, the disparity between us is too vast to quantify.”

Or the following terrible but delightful pun with Robotnik saying that he has to go to a “lame Mushroom Planet!” and the response is, “Well, at least you won’t be the only fun-gi!”

But the kids won’t mind, not with all the chase and battle scenes.

The film does pay lip service to friendship, but at its heart is commerce. There are, for example, plugs for the Olive Garden restaurant chain, Pumas sneakers, and the Zillow websites, and above all, a certain video game. I suspect also that there are plenty of toys for the kids waiting for you at WalMart.

My advice, give in if you must to your kids desire to see this exciting commercial, but tell them they’ll have to wait until it’s available on streaming video—which probably will be quite soon. Don’t contribute any more of your hard-earned money to this seductive juggernaut than you have to.

This review will be in the March issue of VP along with a set of questions for reflection and/or discussion. If you have found reviews on this site helpful, please consider purchasing a subscription or individual issue in The Store.