'Gnomeo & Juliet' Charms With Music of Elton John

Submitted by PatrickMcD [1] on February 11, 2011 - 4:05pm

- Dolly Parton [2]
- Emily Blunt [3]
- Gnomeo & Juliet [4]
- HollywoodChicago.com Content [5]
- Hulk Hogan [6]
- James McAvoy [7]
- Maggie Smith [8]
- Michael Caine [9]
- Movie Review [10]
- Ozzy Osbourne [11]
- Patrick McDonald [12]
- Patrick Stewart [13]
- William Shakespeare [14]

Rating: **4.0**/5.0

CHICAGO – As movie animation domination continues, "Gnomeo and Juliet" throws its stone cap into the ring, and has a lively story that tweaks it source, while respecting its power. James McAvoy and Emily Blunt are the voices of the star-crossed lovers, with the addition of familiar vocals from Michael Caine and Ozzy Osbourne, among others.

This is a take-off of Shakepeares' Romeo and Juliet of course, but it's set in competing English gardens, as the gnome statues (and other species) come to life to protect their turf. Gnomeo belongs to the blue-capped Montagues, and Juliet are with the Red Capulets.

It is established early in the film that the competing garden tribes simply don't like each other. Gnomeo is the rebel of the Blues, racing lawnmowers with the evil Tybalt (voice of Jason Statham). Lord Redbrick (Michael Caine) is the patriarch of the Reds, and generally everyone wants to protect the loveliest gnome statue, the high-on-a-fountain-perch Juliet.

But Juliet hates the gentle life and wants more action. She sneaks out one night to capture a rare orchid, aided by Nannette (Ashley Jensen), a frog fountain. When Gnomeo spies the lovely red gnome grasping at the flower, he intervenes. As they tumble through a new world of flora and feelings, their doomed love (doomed!) opens up a series of unexpected events.

Star Crossed: Juliet (Emily Blunt), Gnomeo (James McAvoy) and Featherstone (Jim Cummings) in 'Gnomeo & Juliet'
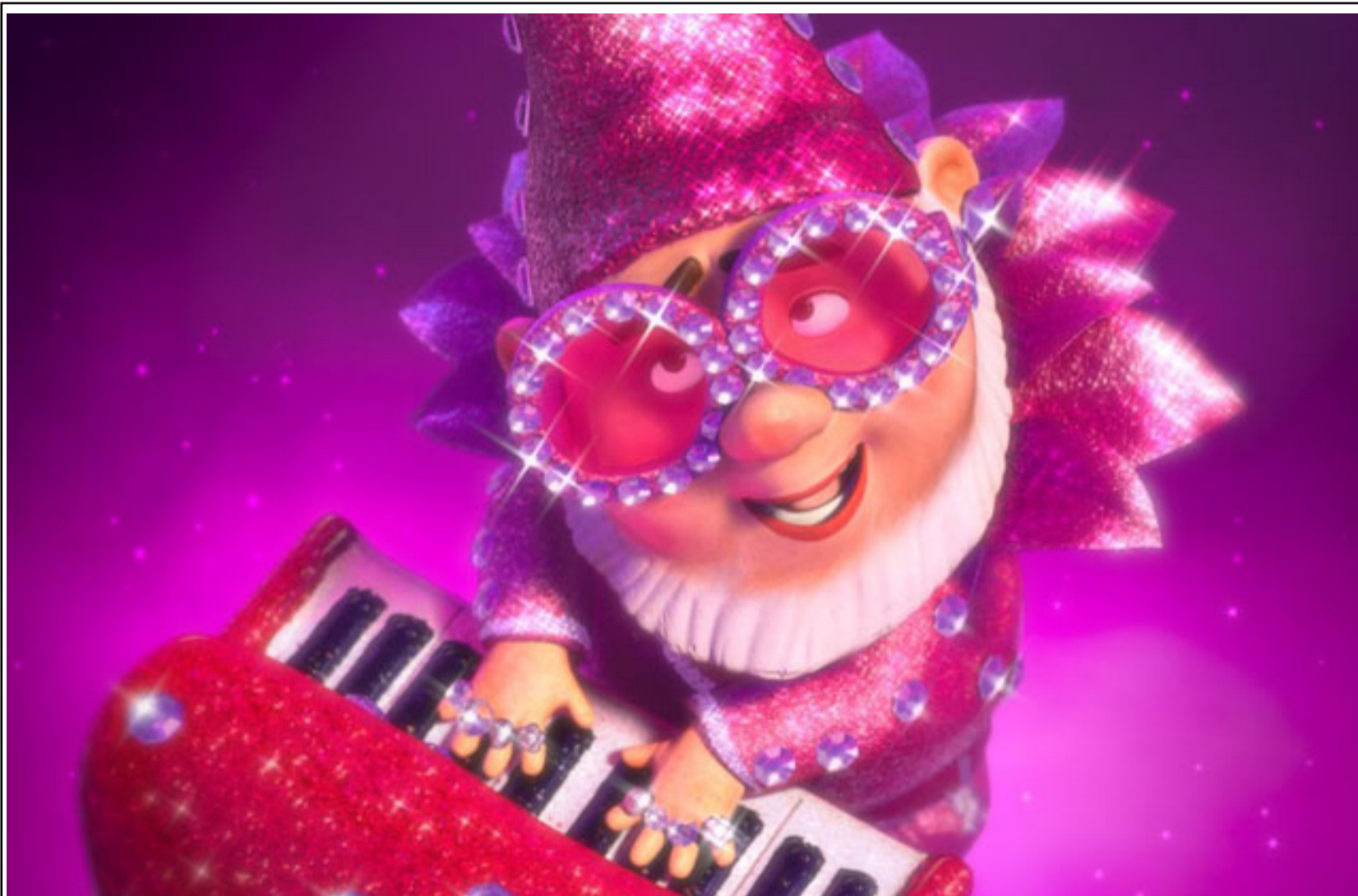*Photo credit: © Miramax Films*

The lovers run to an abandoned garden, seemingly to begin a life on their own, and meet up with a lawn flamingo named Featherstone (Jim Cummings), who has been trapped in a shed for twenty years. He begins to teach them of love, and how their differences could perhaps become their strengths. Wherefore art thou, indeed.

Elton John is the executive producer of this film, and it is his music, old and new, that permeates the soundtrack. It is a reminder of "Yellow Submarine," because some of the Rocket Man's biggest hits are remade as orchestral background music like The Beatles music was in Submarine. The result works, as well as the use of the entire song, such as "Saturday Night's Alright for Fighting," "Don't Go Breaking My Heart" and "Your Song." Elton himself is made Gnome-like in a funny fantasy sequence.

The Gnome concept works as well. Note the sound effects, because every time their stony selves interact (high five, for example), there is a clunk of stone on stone. And besides the gnome theme, the other garden statues get there due, a frog fountain on the red side, strange rabbits on the blue. This is an imaginative world, and while there is a requisite pop culture references and the like, there is some nice comedy just because it's a garden statue universe.

And will they reference their original source material? An extremely amusing interaction results between Gnomeo and a statue of "Bill Shakespeare" – as he's listed in the credits – in which the Bard is kind of a loose cannon (voiced by Patrick Stewart). Romeo and Juliet was a tragedy, as Bill keeps reminding Gnomeo, and his cackling insistence is one of the highlights of the animated effort.

Because this is British based, it has an across-the-pond sensibility that makes it a bit more refreshing than an American spin. There are less self conscious references, and more English Garden jokes. There is something truly odd about having Michael Caine's voice coming out of a chipped gnome statue. This oddness is the charm of the message, with a pink yard flamingo with spindly legs thrown in for comic relief.

Rocket Gnome: Elton John Gets His Moment in 'Gnomeo & Juliet'
Photo credit: © Miramax Films

When I was a lad, all animation was hand drawn, 2D and very sporadic (Disney nearly closed their animation division after "The Black Cauldron" tanked). In the new golden age of computer and motion capture graphics, any world can be created and enjoyed in sparkling 3D, and with animation the glasses are less likely to induce a headache. It is amazing to witness the themes and creativity that comes out of this…and what the heck, the gnomes are fun and the Elton John music behind it is a bonus.

Where will this all lead? Is there a tipping point? Will film consumers get tired of the ever increasing premium price for simple eye candy? The key lesson is to keep the stories plain, simple and entertaining like Gnomeo & Juliet, and all's well that ends well.

"Gnomeo & Juliet," in 3D, opens everywhere February 11th. Featuring the voices of James McAvoy, Emily Blunt, Michael Caine, Maggie Smith, Ozzy Osbourne, Patrick Stewart, Dolly Parton and Hulk Hogan. Directed by Kelly Ashbury. Rated "G"

[15]

By PATRICK McDONALD [16]
Senior Staff Writer
HollywoodChicago.com
pat@hollywoodchicago.com [15]

Source URL (retrieved on *Apr 25 2024 - 10:23am*):

http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/13350/gnomeo-juliet-charms-thru-music-of-elton-john

Links:

[1] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hankq
[2] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/dolly-parton
[3] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/emily-blunt
[4] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/gnomeo-juliet
[5] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/hollywoodchicagocom-content
[6] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/hulk-hogan
[7] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/james-mcavoy
[8] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/maggie-smith
[9] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/michael-caine
[10] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/review.html
[11] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/ozzy-osbourne
[12] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/patrick-mcdonald
[13] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/patrick-stewart
[14] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/william-shakespeare
[15] mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com
[16] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#PAT