

## Animated, Colorful ‘Rio’ Blends Into Mediocre Blur

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on April 15, 2011 - 1:20pm

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Rating: **2.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – “Rio” is a film that nearly defies critical review. There’s nothing particularly wrong with it and I can virtually guarantee you that the little ones in your family will be captivated by the talking, dancing birds with the colorful plumage. But it’s also a film that’s strikingly unmemorable. The characters, the jokes, and even the striking visuals – they all dissipate from the memory like a piece of candy that seems tasty in the moment but ultimately isn’t very filling. “Rio” isn’t a bad movie but with great family entertainment options out there, just being “not bad” isn’t good enough.

There’s something peculiar about setting a family film in the crime-ridden streets of Brazil that centers around illegal animal smuggling and the sexually-charged world of Carnival. Clearly, Blue Sky Studios (the team behind the “Ice Age” movies) were merely looking for as colorful a setting as possible but anyone who knows the real-life story of Brazil (or has seen “City of God”) may think that this was an unusual subject matter. I can imagine naïve families being forced to answer difficult questions about why they can’t buy nearly-extinct birds like the two at the center of their favorite film or why the next family vacation probably shouldn’t be to Rio de Janeiro.



Rio  
*Photo credit: Fox*

Much to the confusion of the rugrat behind me at the family screening of the film, there actually is no character in the movie named “Rio.” The title character is not-so-cleverly named Blu (Jesse Eisenberg), a rare blue macaw who mistakenly ends up in Minnesota instead of in the jungles of Brazil where he was born. As Blu is domesticated and raised by bookstore owner Linda (Leslie Mann), he learns how to fist bump and open the lock on his cage but he never learns how to fly. Naturally, “Rio” will be a story about an awkward bird who learns to find his wings.

To do so takes the involvement of Tulio (Rodrigo Santoro), a scientist who comes to Linda and tells her that he needs Blu to mate with Jewel (Anne Hathaway) to save the species and it has to happen in Brazil. Before Linda and Blu can say “Ole,” they are separated and both birds are captured by smugglers, who are helped by an evil cockatoo named Nigel (Jemaine Clement). Chained together, Jewel has to drag Blu

around town as they try to evade evil marmosets and become friends with a loud Toucan (George Lopez) and some comic relief in the form of Nico (Jamie Foxx) and Pedro (will.i.am), two characters who exist solely to give their voice actors a chance to sing and sell some singles to wee ones. A bulldog voiced by Tracey Morgan pops up near the end but you may be too drowsy by then to notice.



Rio

Photo credit: Fox

“Rio” is filled with bright, beautiful colors that resonate even in the dulled-down world of 3D. Each of the central birds has a strong color scheme from the blues of the two leads to Pedro’s red plumage to Nico’s yellow. And the beaches of Rio are filled with balloons and bathing suits, each more brightly colored than the next. “Rio” may be the most colorful animated film ever made and I imagine it will look even better without the washing out that comes with 3D when it appears on Blu-ray.

Sadly, everything but the visuals makes it unlikely that you’ll want to see it again when it does hit the home market. The central voice actors – Eisenberg, Hathaway, Mann – do solid work, but the script is simply dull and not funny enough for adults or children. The family audience I saw the film with was shockingly silent. It’s just too repetitive and not nearly clever enough for today’s kids. Blu whines, Jewel complains, and everything just kind of blends together into one colorful blur. Walking out, I struggled to remember one memorable line or bit of music or surprising piece of character development. “Rio” may feature beautiful colors, but its script is purely paint-by-numbers.

*“Rio” features voice work by Jesse Eisenberg, Anne Hathaway, George Lopez, Jamie Foxx, will.i.am, Rodrigo Santoro, Jemaine Clement, and Tracy Morgan. It was written and directed by Carlos Saldanha. It is rated G and opens on April 15th, 2011.*



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