

## ‘The Good Dinosaur’ is Pixar Studio’s Most Ordinary Film

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on November 25, 2015 - 6:09pm

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Rating: **2.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – The animation in Pixar Studio’s latest feature ,“The Good Dinosaur,” is nothing short of extraordinary. At times throughout the film, the images looked like they came right out of National Geographic, and I truly couldn’t believe i was watching animation. However, this delightful animation is in service to an undistinguished prehistoric buddy comedy that wouldn’t be out of place in an episode of “The Flintstones.”

The studio’s worst film, “Cars 2,” was hitched to the comedy of Larry The Cable Guy as Mater. It was a dimwitted personality, but at least it had a personality. – this film shows almost no hints of personality at all. “The Good Dinosaur” most closely resembles one of Walt Disney Studios’ confused and rambling projects from the 1970’s. It lacks direction and overarching vision, plus much of the film seems just thrown in to see if it will work – this is the first Pixar film that seems assembled from scraps.



Scene From ‘The Good Dinosaur’

Photo credit: Walt Disney Pictures

The story is a fairly simple one. This is an alternate world where an asteroid never hit the earth and dinosaurs still roam. A young dinosaur

named Arlo is the smallest and weakest in his family of farming apatosauruses, but he’s washed away chasing a caveboy into the mountains. He’s knocked out, and carried far downstream. He wakes up far from home, and he becomes reluctant friends with the caveboy as they find their way back home.

I was continually dazzled by the pictures I was seeing, and landscapes that seemed alive with photo realism even if there was a giant goofy looking green dinosaur lumbering through them. But pretty pictures only take you so far and there’s almost nobody memorable to take us on this dinosaur version of “Homeward Bound.”

The one moment of personality comes courtesy of voice actor Sam Elliott. His voice comes through a T-rex who also happens to be a cattle driver. He and his family of cowpoke T-rexes drive a herd of buffalo across the prairie, fighting off rustlers. They sit around the campfire playing harmonica and telling war stories about battles they once fought. It’s emblematic of the film’s patchwork nature desperate to find something that sticks, but it’s also the only sequence in the film that actually kinda works...and it’s all too brief.



The T-Rex roams in ‘The Good Dinosaur’

Photo credit: Walt Disney Pictures

A checkered production history doesn’t necessarily mean trouble on screen. but this film changed directors, and then changed almost its entire voice cast late in production, and bears all the marks of too many people in the kitchen. The script is credited to Meg LeFauve, working from a story credited to five writers. The main problem may be that there simply isn’t enough material here to sustain a feature. “The Good Dinosaur” starts off pretty thin. and then it never finds the emotional beats to bring in the audience. Even the story’s big twists don’t pack the emotional punch they’re supposed to, landing with a thud instead of a wallop.

Now little kids probably won’t mind this so much. There are a couple of intense scenes that may be too much for the youngest viewers, but I think my 3 year old twins could handle it. In the past, Pixar Animation Studios has always found a way to make films that work on multiple levels – for kids and grownups. For example, “Inside Out” (from earlier this year) had enough memorable characters for two movies. “The Good Dinosaur” doesn’t even have enough for one.

*“The Good Dinosaur” opens everywhere November 25th, in 3D and regular screenings. See local listings for 3D theaters and show times. Featuring the voices of Sam Elliott, Jeffrey Wright, Frances McDormand, Steve Zahn, Anna Paquin, Jack Bright and John Ratzenberger, Screenplay by Meg LeFauve. Directed by Peter Sohn. Rated “PG”*



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