

‘Cars 3’ Puts Series Franchise Back on Right Track

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on June 16, 2017 - 7:41am

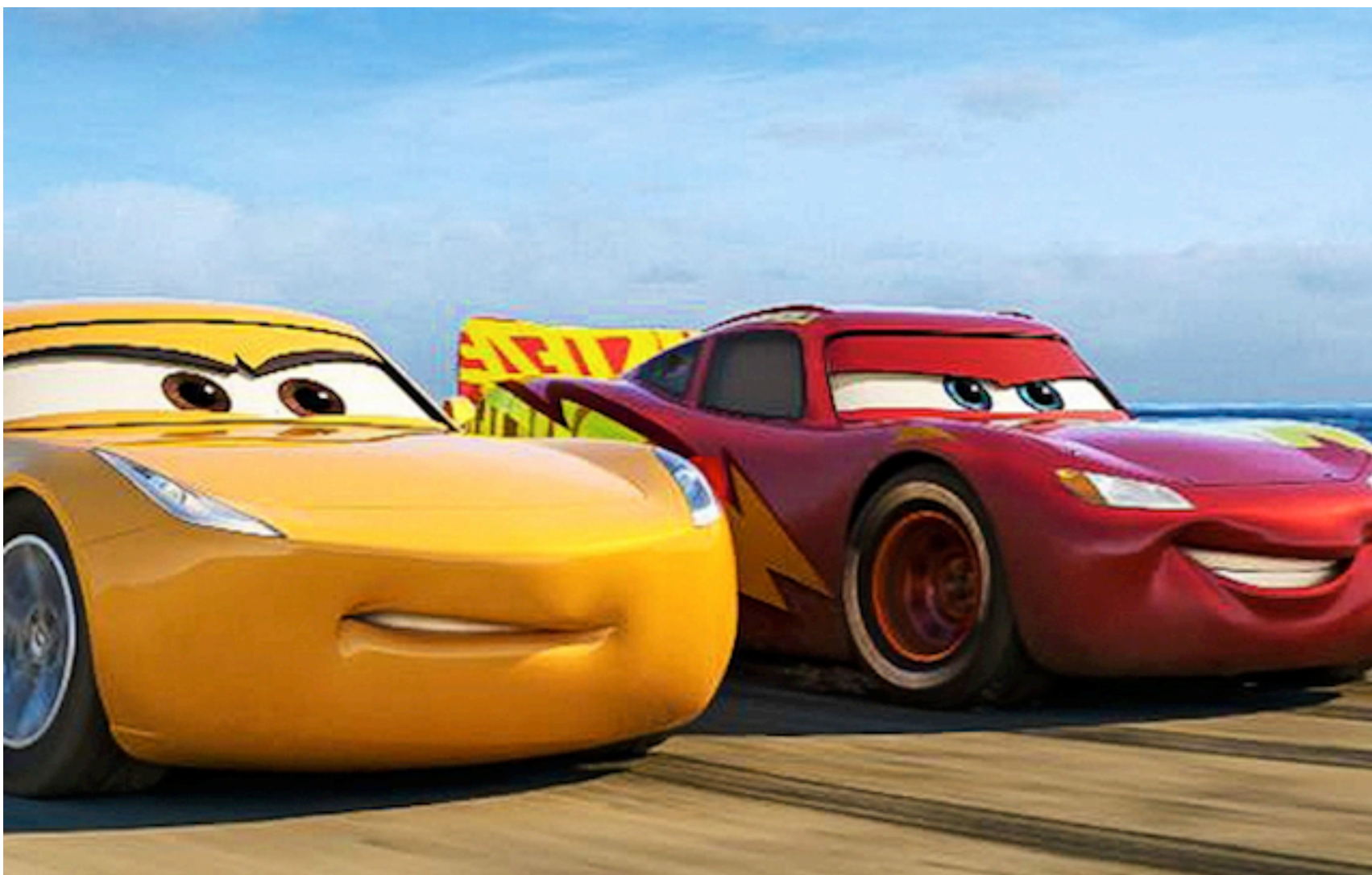
- [Armie Hammer](#) [2]
- [Bob Costas](#) [3]
- [Bonnie Hunt](#) [4]
- [Brian Fee](#) [5]
- [Cars 3](#) [6]
- [Chris Cooper](#) [7]
- [Cristela Alonzo](#) [8]
- [Darrell Waltrip](#) [9]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [10]
- [Kerry Washington](#) [11]
- [Larry the Cable Guy](#) [12]
- [Margo Martindale](#) [13]
- [Movie Review](#) [14]
- [Nathan Fillion](#) [15]
- [Owen Wilson](#) [16]
- [Pixar Animation](#) [17]
- [Ray Magliozzi](#) [18]
- [Spike Walters](#) [19]
- [Tony Shaloub](#) [20]
- [Walt Disney Pictures](#) [21]



Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – The Cars movies continue to be the kiddieland of Pixar Animation franchises. Kids adore them, parents tolerate them. Unlike the best of Pixar’s output, the Cars films are lovingly crafted cartoons aimed squarely at kids with far more attention detail than the average fare you’d find scrolling through Netflix. The best that can be said is that “Cars 3” represents a considerable step up from “Cars 2”... which remains the worst movie Pixar has ever produced by a wide margin.

Returning to the narrative themes of the first Cars film, this one puts Lightning McQueen (voice of Owen Wilson) back on the racetrack and dials Larry The Cable Guy’s Mater character down to a glorified cameo. This time Lightning McQueen is the esteemed veteran dealing with hotshot challengers. When a gigantic crash knocks him out for the season he must find a way to deal with the changed landscape, and a field of new more technologically savvy racers eager to take his place, led by Jackson Storm (Armie Hammer).



Cruz (voice of Cristela Alonzo) Trains Lightning (Owen Wilson) in ‘Cars 3’

Photo credit: Walt Disney Pictures

In an attempt at a comeback, McQueen signs on with an oily mudflap king as his new sponsor and gets saddled with a new trainer Cruz Ramirez (Cristela Alonzo) to get him back into racing shape. If you guessed that McQueen and his new trainer would detest each other at first, and then gradually win over each others’ mutual respect, then you are quite a savvy moviegoer for a seven year old. But those under that age may be the only ones who won’t see the eventual narrative pit stop ahead.

Along the way McQueen and Ramirez wind up trying to recapture the grit and glory of his youth by finding the mentor to his old mentor (Hudson Hornet, voiced by the late Paul Newman). This side trip gives “Cars 3” a chance to recycle some of the heart of the mentor relationship by subbing in another Oscar-winning actor (Chris Cooper) to give some homespun wisdom in a slightly southern drawl.

At this point the film starts to resemble “Rocky IV” – of all things – with the technologically advanced Jackson Storm training on simulators indoors while McQueen and Ramirez are out dodging tractors during stampedes, evading crazed school buses at demolition derbies, and racing on old deserted dirt tracks and getting their tires dirty.



Jackson Storm (Armie Hammer) is Lightning’s Rival in ‘Cars 3’

Photo credit: Walt Disney Pictures

The celebrity cameos, and lame car puns are back in spades, but then again what would you expect. Those lame car puns are part of the engine of this franchise after all, and they at least entertain their target audience.

“Cars 3” won’t go down in the annals of great Pixar films. Even the original “Cars” is genuinely regarded as middle of the road Pixar Animation at best. However, it certainly won’t grate on parents... who just want to keep their kids fairly quiet for close to two hours.

“Cars 3” opens everywhere on June 16th, in 3D and regular screenings. See local listings for the 3D theaters and showtimes. Featuring the voices of Owen Wilson, Cristela Alonzo, Chris Cooper, Nathan Fillion, Larry the Cable Guy, Armie Hammer, Ray Magliozzi, Tony Shaloub, Bonnie Hunt, Kerry Washington, Bob Costas, Margo Martindale. Screenplay by Kiel Murray, Bob Peterson and Mike Rich. Directed by Brian Fee. Rated “G”



[22]

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- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/cars-3>
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