

'Wreck-It Ralph' Offers Witty Fun, Character-Building Lessons

In the same vein as *Toy Story*, in which children's playthings have real lives, *Wreck-It Ralph* imagines a world where video game characters come to life after an arcade closes its doors. It's arguably the most creative and entertaining family movie this year.

Disney's 52nd animated feature tells the story of a regular guy just looking for—pardon the pun—a little wreck-ognition.

Ralph (voiced by John C. Reilly)—a Donkey Kong-style, Hulk-size demolition villain—is tired of being overshadowed by Fix-It Felix (Jack McBrayer's voice), the “good guy” star of their fictional 8-bit arcade game called *Fix-It Felix Jr.*, who always gets to save the day.

“It's hard to love your job when no one else seems to like you for doing it,” Ralph, who has been doing his job as “The Bad Guy” for 30 years, points out. As one critic noted, the movie “builds on a wonderful premise that explores whether folks are condemned to be victims of their own circumstances.”

The identity-crisis dilemma is just one of a few character-building lessons in *Wreck-It Ralph*, which includes doing what's right and standing up for the oppressed.

There are also right-on cultural observations that will hit home for Christian families. “When did video games get so violent? It's scary out here!” Ralph observes while caught in the middle of a first-person shooter game.

Three of my five boys—Alex, 11, Andrew, 9, and Chase, 6—were excited to catch the movie, especially because they're avid

Wii and Nintendo gamers. They also got a kick of their dad being a video-game aficionado many moons ago of classics such as *Donkey Kong* and *Pac-Man*.

Speaking of which, one of the humorous moments of the movie features a meeting of “Bad-Anon”—a video game villains therapy group. During the meeting, Ralph gets some advice from *Street Fighter*’s hairy-chested Zangief, and Bowser, Dr. Robotnik, M. Bison and a Pac-Man ghost are in attendance.

The evildoers join hands and voices for the Bad-Guy Affirmation: “I am bad, and that’s good,” they chant. “I will never be good, and that’s not bad. There’s no one I’d rather be than me.”

There are also cameos by a handful of classic video game characters, including Q*bert, Sonic the Hedgehog, Dig Dug and the bartender from *Tapper*.

After attending the support group for arcade evildoers, Ralph decides to travel through a power strip and enter other games to prove he can be a good guy and “win a medal.” In his quest to become a hero, Ralph inadvertently wreaks havoc as he travels from game to game in search of redemption via his decision to defy his programming.

On his mission, he meets the tough-as-nails Sergeant Calhoun (voiced by Jane Lynch) from the first-person action game *Hero’s Duty*—a spoof of *Call of Duty*. But it’s the feisty misfit Vanellope von Schweetz (the voice of Sarah Silverman) from the candy-coated cart-racing game, *Sugar Rush*, whose world is threatened when Ralph accidentally unleashes a deadly enemy that threatens the entire arcade.

“Everyone here says I’m just a mistake,” says Vanellope, who is technically a glitch in the *Mario Kart*-style racing game set in a literal Candyland.

Rated PG, *Wreck-It Ralph* is far from a faith-based kid’s

flick, but it does subtly address the biblical declaration that everyone—albeit in this case video game characters—are fearfully and wonderfully made for a purpose by God. Christians will also be able to relate to the story of Ralph and Vanellope, who both need a restart on life.

With its elaborate, candy-bright production design and zoomy 3-D action, the movie offers a fun ride for kids and adults. As another critic notes: “The imagery is amazing—and always witty. This is a Disney cartoon, but it’s got the imagination and brains of a Pixar feature.”

Wreck-It Ralph is rated PG for some rude humor and mild action violence. The movie features lots of video game action, sci-fi shooting and comic violence, although nothing graphic. Still, younger children could be frightened by scenes of giant, attacking sci-fi bugs, a zombie’s heart pulled out of chest for comic relief, man eaten by bug—mostly played for comedy—and peril during racing. A little girl says she’s going to have people executed, but doesn’t.

There is no profanity, but a lot of crude humor, bathroom jokes and name-calling. Several characters are seen at a party drinking, and another scene shows characters making and drinking martinis. There’s also a game that’s an old-fashioned bar, but it’s stated that they’re drinking root beer.

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