

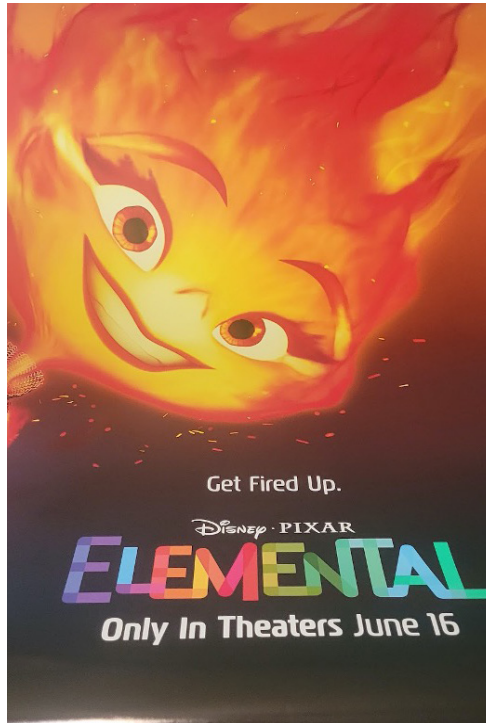
FILM REVIEW

Avatar Personified: *Elemental* LUCAS WERNER

(WARNING: CONTAINS SPOILERS)

Following in the wake of the success of *The Good Dinosaur* in 2015, Disney and Pixar's latest movie *Elemental* was released in theaters on June 16. This cinematic adventure shows one character's journey of truly figuring out what they want to do with their life, while navigating through ethnic discrimination along the way. An accidental encounter between fire elemental Ember Lumen and water elemental Wade Ripple sets in motion a series of events of how opposites attract.

Throughout the film, there are demonstrations of how foreigners are treated initially, but become accepted by other cultures as the tale unfolds. An example of this is when Bernie Lumen (Ember's father) doesn't take as a compliment Wade's suggestion of watering down hot coals (a Firetown delicacy) to make them more enjoyable for other elementals. At first the suggestion poses a threat to Fireland's traditions, but minds change before the



We rate *Elemental* 4.8 out of 5. Photo by Lucas Werner

end of the film. Whether it's because of skin color or how a certain meal is prepared, there are always those being persecuted by supremacists, thinking that their way of doing things is better than others. *Elemental* suggests that we need to respect new ways of thinking, rather than throwing them away like trash and burning them in a rotting dumpster fire. That's a valuable lesson for all ages.

Normally when different elements like acid and metal come together, there's a dangerous result. But there are certain scenarios where different elements can create something new even if it's not immediate. When Ember feels that she doesn't want to let her family down and Wade says that Ember should do something for herself, initially, she doesn't care much about that. However, she thinks about an alternative career instead of taking over her family's store more and more over the course of this tale. To sum it up, water and fire, over some time, create steam.

This movie had some things both good and bad that really

resonated with me, so let's look at what was good first. Showing examples of how fire elementals are being persecuted for possibly being a danger to other elements (Earth, Air, and Water) is cleverly similar to real life problems that minorities face. Bernie and Cinder Lumen (Ember's parents) are initially unable to find housing because they are flammable, which mirrors racial problems in real life. The growing feelings of love between Ember and Wade as the film progresses is well handled.

On the negative side, there is an unresolved plot issue involving a burst dam.

Discrimination of other races and cultures is a real thing, but even though it's hard to be accepted into a community at first, it doesn't necessarily mean that accepting other cultures is a hopeless pipe-dream. Because of how *Elemental* presents this fact, I'm giving this movie a 4.8 out of 5, and I can't wait to see what the next Pixar movie will be. If you want to see this masterclass of a film, it's now streaming on Disney+.

FILM REVIEW

Spider-Con Extreme! *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse* LUCAS WERNER

(WARNING: CONTAINS SPOILERS)

Nearly five years after the premiere of *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*, the highly anticipated sequel *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse* was released in theaters in early June 2023. Not to put too fine a point on it, this movie is insanely awesome from beginning to end!

The story resumes a year and four months after the events of *Into the Spider-Verse*. Miles Morales is having trouble balancing his superhero duties with his personal responsibilities. Meanwhile, a multiverse-level threat is on the rise. With few friends to turn to and the threat looming ever closer, can our web-slinging hero save the day?

In terms of animation, producers Phil Lord and Christopher Miller have utilized tools that were used to create the acclaimed Netflix movie *The Mitchells vs. the Machines*. Each environment in *Across the Spider-Verse* has the appearance of being drawn by a different artist, creating six

different nostalgic and form-fitting animation styles. These make the first *Spider-Verse* film pale in comparison, especially considering that the Spot's portals were described as resembling "sentient ink splats on a comic artist's drawing."

The introduction of new characters to the *Spider-verse*, such as Miguel O'Hara (aka Spiderman 2099) and Hobie Brown (aka Spider-Punk) add depth to the story. A beautifully animated fight/chase scene across Earth-2099, where the Spider Society is trying to catch Miles, effectively showcases Miles' struggle after being forced into something he didn't want to do. It resonates with the universal theme that many people are in the same boat at one point or another in their lives.

The film has some minor flaws, such as Miguel's desire for Miles to lose both his dad and his uncle, who had already died in the first movie. I understand that the responsibility of being Spiderman is a sacrifice, but losing two mentors at a young age is implausible. O'Hara

also places the blame for the anomalies' creation on Miles. However, this rage is clearly misplaced, as it was the scientist who turned into the Spot that brought the Earth-42 radioactive spider to Earth-1610, thus creating the anomalies and setting in motion the events of *Into the Spider-Verse*.

Honestly, O'Hara is way too thick-headed to understand. Personally, it feels like the only way to fix Spot's mess is to go back in time to before he brought the radioactive spider to the wrong universe, and show him and the other Alchemax workers conducting the particle collider tests that these will have disastrous results in the future. Convincing them to shut the project down could prevent the anomalies from ever happening in the first place.

I'd rate this movie a 4.2 out of 5, and I can't wait to see the next installment, *Beyond The Spider-Verse*, when it comes out. Meanwhile, if you want to check out this spectacle, it's now streaming on Disney+.



We rate *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse* 4.2 out of 5. Photo by Lucas Werner