

Wonder Woman 1984 bites the dust

Second installment of the series falls short of expectations despite a vibrant landscape

GRACE NUGENT
online co-editor in chief

A film about how truth and love will conquer all — how original. However sweet the sentiment, we have learned from politics and life experiences that truth and love do not always triumph, and neither does this movie.

There were very high hopes for the second installment of the Wonder Woman franchise after the success of the original, but the newly released Wonder Woman 1984 is lackluster at best.

To refresh memories, the first movie brought the dynamic character to life as she fought Germans in World War I alongside Captain Steve Trevor and friends (who are absent from this film). Walking out of the Alamo Drafthouse theatre in 2017, the possibilities of where Wonder Woman could go felt endless (spoiler alert: they were not endless). Diana infiltrating Soviet Russia in the Cold War era, channeling some Percy Jackson and seeing Diana unlock secrets about her past at the ruins of mount Olympus, or even Diana's kickass amazon family defending the world. It seemed anything could happen.

After slowly sauntering away from my couch in 2020, however, instead of feeling glee at the prospect of being an empowered female warrior, I felt very underwhelmed and filled with questions. I pondered that it might be one of those movies you have to watch a few times to really understand. I was wrong about that. At no point in the many watchings I've had of this movie do all the elements make sense together.

What did Patty Jenkins and her writers come up with to top the dark war-torn reality and the

rhetoric of unlimited power?... A rock! In lieu of a Hitler-esque baddie, we are introduced to businessman Maxwell Lorde, a sort of ware-cheetah, and a magical crystal.

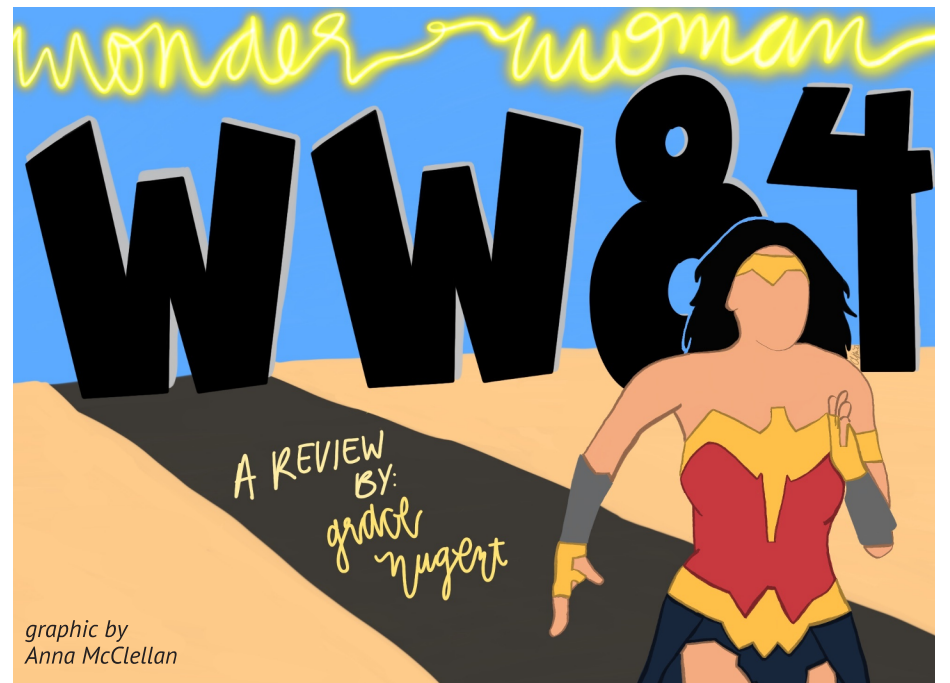
Welcome to the sleek, color-soaked '80s where malls, side ponies and fanny packs are all the rage, and our heroine, Diana Prince (aka. Wonder Woman, aka. Gal Gadot), lives a historian-by-day-crime-fighting-by-night lifestyle. While working at the Smithsonian, Diana encounters an ancient crystal that grants wishes. Trouble ensues as these wishes are granted, and the entire world starts to crumble because of this rock.

If you've read (or are currently reading) "The Great Gatsby" by F. Scott Fitzgerald, you understand the motif of the "American Dream" which Jenkins and crew tried to incorporate. Instead, a sideways-skewed movie about greed and capitalism was born. This avarice is personified in slinky, sketchy, conniving businessman Maxwell Lorde, played by Pedro Pascal. Max's greatest fear is being a "loser," sounding very "Diary of a Wimpy Kid," and while Pascal is normally a magnetic, charismatic actor (i.e. Game of Thrones, The Mandalorian, Kingsman the Golden Circle), the script and storyline for Pascal is bland and ugly.

Lorde is not alone in his nefarious actions. Viewers are also introduced to *SNL* alumna Kristin Wiig as Barbara Minerva, an awkward, socially invisible fellow historian turned apex predator. Both Pascal and Wiig play their characters to the extent the janky script allows but are not given the scope to have fun with their respective personalities.

Without spoiling anything, Steve Trevor resurfaces. (It was in the trailer, people.) The thing that this movie depends on, besides a wardrobe montage, is the chemistry between

Wonder Woman 1984
2020 (PG13); action-adventure, **
Written by: Patty Jenkins, Geoff Johns, David Callaham
Directed by: Patty Jenkins
Starring: Gal Gadot, Chris Pine, Kristen Wiig, Pedro Pascal



graphic by
Anna McClellan

Pine and Gadot. Similar to their dynamic in the first movie, the two are very comfortable with each other and show affection, and not in the ooey-goey mushy way reserved exclusively for Hallmark movies.

The mediocrity of the film was not only seen in the plot inconsistencies or mess of terrible "goof" jokes, but also in the typically brilliant action scenes. We are used to seeing Diana absolutely destroy multiple evil Germans while using that iconic golden lasso, sliding on her knees in slow motion, and hearing the thrilling "danger music" motif. Instead, the action sequences in 1984 are dismal, with the exception of the excursion to

the mall. Riddled with CGI inconsistencies and contorted body positions that can only be accomplished by Elastagirl (not to mention the fiasco at the White House), viewers are left without the magic a new Wonder Woman movie seemed to promise.

As much as I appreciate Gal Gadot and company, it's hard to ignore that this movie could have been spectacular given the era and range of the assembled cast.

All in all, I do not recommend this movie, and if you are really jonesing for some Gal Gadot or Wonder Woman content, I would stick to the first film. Some things are better left untouched.

SOUL creates worlds of beautiful whimsy while making you question the meaning of life

GRACE NUGENT
online co-editor in chief

Soul — a movie that makes you fall in love with Pixar animated characters while at the same time giving you an existential crisis. Hats off to Disney.

Pixar has managed to take perplexing meta-questions that keep both children and adults awake staring up at their ceiling (i.e. *what is our purpose on earth? why do I exist? what makes us tick?*) and create a children's movie that will appease all ages. These ideas are crafted into an aesthetically pleasing, graceful kinesthetic landscape that is candy for the eyes and the soul.

Disney's first dip into the self-reflective pool was the Pixar animation film *Inside Out*. *Soul* is like *Inside Out*, but instead of following someone's emotions, we are introduced to dejected middle school band teacher and aspiring Jazz pianist Joe (Jamie Foxx). After

falling into a manhole, he takes a dive into another realm and is met by rebellious, devious and misunderstood soul 22 (Tina Fey). 22 and Joe embark on an adventure that takes them from the ectoplasmic environment of the "Great Before" to the hustle and bustle of New York City as they struggle to find out what it means to live.

One of the things *Soul* does perfectly is making its viewer appreciate the small things in life. Bagels, the wind, subway performers, the grates that blow air that Marilyn Monroe stepped on. All of the things that we often overlook due to the fast-paced world we live in, Joe and 22 encounter in the most beautiful way.

Jazz, not as known to the younger generation, brings the groove and artistic rhythm to *Soul*. Joe's passion is jazz, and like Ryan Gosling's Sebastian in *La La Land*, both characters live and breathe musical notes and tend to prioritize their own vision above their relationships with others.

Another thing that made *Soul* great was its

setting. One of the things that sets Pixar apart from other animation studios is its breathtaking world-building. *Soul* takes place in the Great Before, a swirling mystical blue and purple landscape, and New York City. The New York of *Soul* is sunny and elaborate with the hectic traffic, honking horns, aggressive yelling, and pizza you can almost smell through the screen. This New York brings a smile to viewers as Pixar

reintroduces us to one of the most iconic cities in the world in a whimsical, wonderful, introspective way.

Some of the cutest quirks that made me, a sometimes sarcastic and cynical 16-year-old, giggle centered around the bureaucratic, squiggly "camp counselors": the Jerrys (played

by the soothing voices of Wes Studi, Alice Vraga, and Richard Ayoade). There's also a being named Terry (Rachel House), the accountant, who serves as the "villain" — and a very candy-coated one at that, but in true Disney fashion, he brings the laughs.

A special shout-out also is due to British talk show host Graham Norton, who voices Moonwind, the reincarnation of '60s hippie culture who you would find vibing to Jimmy Hendrix at Woodstock.

One could write for pages about how fabulous and colorful yet minimalist and metaphorical the animation is, but to sum it up, this movie is a work of art. The animation, character development, landscapes and music all work together seamlessly to create a movie that can be enjoyed and appreciated whatever the age or

Soul
2020 (PG), family, drama, animation, ****
Screenplay: Pete Docter, Kemp Powers, Mike Jones
Directed by: Pete Docter
Starring: Jamie Foxx, Tina Fey, Angela Bassett, Questlove, Phyllicia Rashad