Flashback review: ‘Who Framed Roger Rabbit’

By Vincent Civitillo
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Every once in a while a movie comes along that, for one reason or another, is not taken seriously as at the critical turning point in cinema that it is.

A perfect example of which is the 1988 Academy Award-winning masterpiece Who Framed Roger Rabbit, which through a seamless blend of live-action acting and animation, became one of the most beloved, and inspirational, animated films of all time.

In the feature, directed by Robert Zemeckis (Forrest Gump) and set in the late 1940s, cartoon characters and human beings live alongside each other, but not completely peacefully. A certain prejudice exists between the two, and a case is to be made in court to find out just why.

Making the presentation even more memorable is the appearance of cartoon characters from varying studios, including both Disney and Warner Bros. For the first time ever, roles like Mickey Mouse, Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Woody Woodpecker and Betty Boop were seen interacting with each other in the same film, and the piano duet between Donald and Daffy Duck was simply priceless.

One thing to expect in a film featuring characters like Foghorn Leghorn and Goofy would be mediocre acting on the part of their live-action counterparts. However, Hoskins and Christopher Lloyd (Judge Doom) are exceptional in their roles. They knew exactly how to act without the characters there in front of them to respond with far before a time when films like this were the norm. In addition, they’re being joined by legendary voice actors behind the scenes such as Mel Blanc, who gave the voices to countless characters, including Bugs Bunny, Mr. Spacely and Barney Rubble, for decades. Wayne Allwine, voice of Mickey Mouse since 1983, gave the film an authentic quality amongst fans it otherwise would not have received.

The inspirational landmark that Roger Rabbit made on Hollywood is easily in the special effects department. With effects that clearly rivaled those of Star Wars and Back to the Future, Who Framed Roger Rabbit set a benchmark in blue-screen technology that paved the way for later films to include animated characters such as Jar Jar Binks in the Star Wars prequels, Sméagol in The Lord of the Rings trilogy and a few angry dinosaurs in Jurassic Park.

With its latest release on a brand new Vista Series DVD, the film has made a comeback in a definitive way.

Packaged in its original 1.85:1 anamorphic widescreen transfer and housing both a Dolby Digital 5.1 Surround mix and a DTS track, as well as a commentary and a taxi-cab full of extras, this release clearly makes up for its shameful first run on the format back in 1999 and ensures the best quality possible so that the film can be cherished by generations to come.

From two different cartoon worlds, Disney’s Mickey Mouse and Warner Bros.’ Bugs Bunny unite in the movie Who Framed Roger Rabbit and put aside their animating differences. Although it was released before in a mediocre DVD, the newly restored Vista Series set improves upon the transfer of the previous release to provide a definitive edition.

Of course, like any other band, Rufio’s die-hard fan base claims the band as their inspiration for writing and playing music. Impressively starting out so young (Sellers was a mere seventeen when he first stepped into the studio) and gaining so much recognition and success so quickly, Rufio is a staple role model band for young musicians.

“Love what you're playing,” Sellers advised aspiring bands, “and know why you're playing it. I feel that it's really awkward and weird when kids tell me I'm their inspiration, because it's like, ‘Why me? I'm just a little white kid! You know?’

The members of Rufio do realize, however, how lucky they have been to be where they are right now, according to Sellers.

“I'm thankful for everything. I'm thankful for the life that I have right now,” he said. “I'd rather not be in any other position.”

From left to right, Rufio band members, Clark Domae, Jon Berry, MikeJimenez and Scott Sellers, have just begun their road to rock band stardom. The band is set to release another CD sometime in June and will soon open for the band Millencolin during a springtime tour. Its new CD has no permanent title; however, fans can expect the sound to be similar to their last album, Perhaps, I Suppose. The band’s loyal fans will appreciate their upcoming CD and should look forward to more live performances coming soon.

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