FROM WEBS TO WORLDS

"ACROSS THE SPIDERVERSE" SPINS A MULTIDIMENSIONAL MASTERPIECE

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"Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse" delivered a visually stunning, musically intriguing film that left audiences begging for more screentime with beloved characters, both old and new.

While "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse" followed Miles Morales and his early journey into taking on the role of a superhero, the heavily anticipated sequel looks deeper into the personal relationships he has developed during the time between the two movies. From conflicts with his parents to a special visit from Gwen Stacy, the movie allows the audience have more of an insight into who Miles truly is. The dive into Miles' personal life coupled with his adventures throughout the multiverse with Gwen make for an adventure-packed film with surprises and hidden gems at every twist and turn.

The movie begins with a glimpse into Gwen's life after the loss of her best friend. She struggles to come to terms with the past while keeping her Spider-Woman identity hidden from her police captain father who is out to solve the murder of Peter Parker. As she takes on another villain, Gwen encounters Miguel O'Hara and Jess Drew, who invite her to join a secret society of interdimensional Spider-people who work together to keep their respective homes safe from evil.

When the audience last saw Miles, he was embracing the responsibilities of his newfound superhero status and returning to his dimension after his time with Gwen. When we meet him again during "Across the Spider-Verse," he is in his junior year of high school and attempting to balance grades and saving his city. Miles' newfound comfort in his role as Spider-Man is fun to watch as a viewer because you see the evolution and growth from his unfamiliarity in the first film.

Miles and Gwen reunite, only to realize a new villain called the Spot is out wreaking havoc again. As a result, the duo is thrust into a high-stakes chase of the Spot throughout different Earths where they encounter new Spider-Men such as Pavitr Prabhakar, Spider-Man India, and Hobie Brown, Spider-Punk, and the film begins to pick up the pace. The interactions between all the characters made for a comedic, well-rounded group that had the audience audibly reacting to various scenes. Additionally, seeing a diverse cast of Spider characters

POW!

BOOM!

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that mesh well into the storyline was a wonderful highlight throughout the movie. Each character had a unique, original personality that came together with the rest of the group to create some of the most memorable scenes in the film.

As the gang tries to uncover what's going on with the Spot, the movie brings more depth to Mile's character and his specific circumstances as Spider-Man, allowing for the audience to slowly put together the pieces of his puzzle. One of the things I admire most about Marvel films is their ability to foreshadow and reference previous films. This movie delivered on that front, making it an extra engaging watch for big fans like myself as we searched for the details throughout the film.

The first Spider-Verse movie was applauded for its beautiful animation and the sequel did not disappoint. The attention to detail and dedication to high-quality art that the animators created came through in the final product. Each Earth was unique and artistically distinct in style. Highlights included Gwen's Earth, Earth-65, which had a color scheme reflective of her emotions, and Pavitr's Earth, Earth-50101, which had an India-America combined aesthetic with the city of Mumbattan. My personal favorite universe was the Lego Earth which was animated by a 14-year old YouTuber. However, the best part of the animation was Hobie Brown's character design. His eye-catching punk rock aesthetic used experimental animation technology to create a breathtaking visual that stood out among the already gorgeous film. Combined with his humor and carefree attitude, Hobie was a stand-out in every scene he was in.

Another spectacular aspect of the film was the soundtrack. Produced by Metro Boomin, the album featured some of the most popular artists of our time such as Future and 21 Savage. Swae Lee made a reappearance in the Spider-Verse after his popular 2018 track "Sunflower" with Post Malone. This time, he returned with Lil Wayne and Offset for the opening track titled "Annihilate." The best part about the music of the film was how well it kept up with the high-energy vibes of the movie. Every song on the album fits into the scene it is assigned to like a custom glove, enrapturing the audience into the overall experience of the movie. The soundtrack alone makes the film a must watch for how well-incorporated it was. My favorite track on the album was "Am I Dreaming" by Metro Boomin, A$AP Rocky and Roisee because it felt like being transported into the brightly colored, dreamlike worlds that were shown throughout the movie.

Despite being over two hours long, "Spiderman: Across the Spider-Verse" makes you feel as if no time has passed while watching it. In fact, it leaves the audience desperate to continue with the story line that they established throughout those two hours. The movie was the satisfying sequel that fans had been waiting for, and I look forward to seeing what comes next for Miles and his story.

"The Little Mermaid" swims to cinematic success

Despite controversy surrounding Ariel's race, the movie flips skeptics on their backs, delivers dazzling musical score and alluring underwater visuals

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Combining beautiful cinematography, stunning singing, and a colorful cast of characters, Disney's live action "The Little Mermaid" far exceeds expectations and will enchant even the sternest of skeptics.

The discourse surrounding the release of the "The Little Mermaid" in May 2023 had taken social media by storm for months prior. Some groups expressed disapproval of Ariel's race in the live-action, feeling that she should have been a white character like in the original 1989 version. However, after watching the movie, it's clear that making Ariel a black character is a minuscule but positive change in the original storyline that is bringing diversity into Disney's works. Disney has been including more diverse characters recently, such as Moana in the movie "Moana" and Joe in the Disney Pixar movie "Soul" — it's an appreciated change of pace that is important for people of color because of how rarely they see themselves represented on the movie screens.

Because of all the discourse surrounding the movie, my thoughts while watching the movie were plagued with race in mind. I was excitingly overwhelmed with how much diversity was shown in the movie, as the movie showed all seven daughters of the sea as a different race. This small detail could make many kids of color feel special since they are so underrepresented on TV. Representation and inclusivity are important for all kinds of individuals to feel that they are seen by others.

Cinematically, this movie was absolutely beautiful. The shots filmed underwater showed the beauty of the ocean, and the attention to detail in the underwater scenes was thoroughly done. Although Ariel's mermaid outfit could have been a little more detailed, her human outfits made up for it by looking flawless.

When it comes to the differences with the original animated version in 1989, this remake had some distinct changes. Despite the obvious being the inclusion of different races through Ariel and her other sisters, the sisters' backstories were completely erased. In the original, there is a song that essentially lets the sisters talk. In the remake, it seems as if the sisters are only there to show viewers that Ariel has siblings instead of being separate, important characters. This makes me wonder if Disney has future movie plans to dive into these sisters' backstories and personalities because I truly want to see who they are and I'm sure other fans of this movie would appreciate that as well.

Another change that I noticed is that Ariel was the one that killed Ursula in the end. However, in the original, Prince Eric is the one that leads to impaling Ursula. This remake having Ariel impale Ursula gives it a twist and portrays Ariel as a strong female character. It's also incredible to see a princess defeat her villain in a movie since we usually see a "knight in shining armor" or a prince that saves the princesses. There are surely more plot differences, but this is the biggest one that stood out to me.

Some of the songs are also different in the remake from the original, and this change made the movie stand out in the way it did. Halle Bailey's stunning voice in the song "Part of Your World" gave me goosebumps in the movie theatre, and is even better than the original version.

Halle Bailey did an incredible job playing Ariel – she was the perfect person for the role. Her voice is stunning, angelic, and heavenly. Melissa McCarthy's performance as Ursula is runner-up for my favorite in the movie, with her character's subtle comedy making all her scenes memorable. Despite being known for her comedic roles, McCarthy played the villain's role flawlessly. Jonah Hauer-King also played Prince Eric's role perfectly as well and really brought a lot of charm and compassion to Eric's character.

Despite the drama this movie caused, "The Little Mermaid" seems to be doing extremely well, grossing $413 million to date. I give this movie a nine out of ten and recommend it to anyone that wants to see an old Disney fairytale include diversity extremely well.
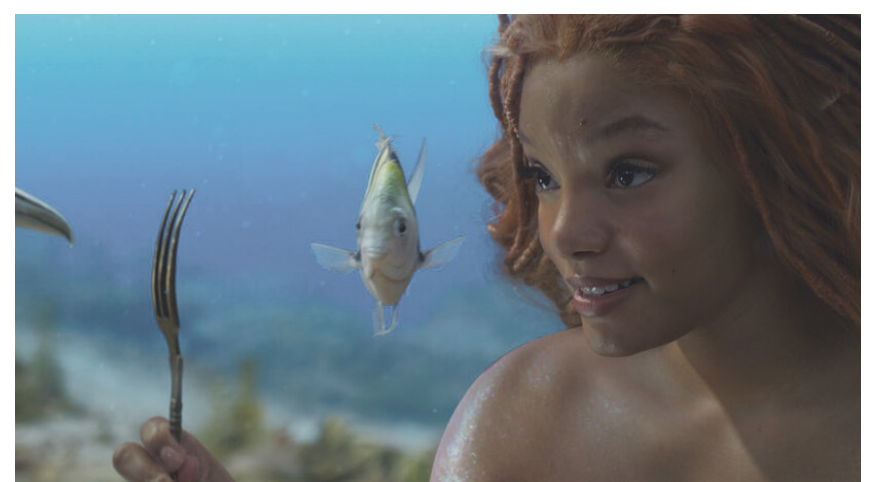
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A remake of the classic 1989 Disney animation, "The Little Mermaid" combines graphic effects with live actors to transport you to a whole new world.