

# Roger Rabbit 'light-hearted' but philosophical

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Who Framed Roger Rabbit is one of those rare movies — a hit with audiences and critics. It is a mega-movie, with superb animation, lavish sets, good cinematography, amazing acting — and Roger Rabbit stinks.

Roger Rabbit has two major themes. The first is a light-hearted "It's good to laugh." Not too philosophically challenging, I'll admit, but harmless enough. This theme explains the movie's popularity with children, seeking cartoonish laughter, and with adults, seeking something in this world worthy of joy.

But the second, blatant theme is the anti-technology, anti-American cluster of slogans: "Progress is evil," "Businessmen are greedy and destructive" and "Capitalism, technology and the profit-motive will destroy all life on earth." And this, of course, explains its appeal with the critics — mostly liberal anti-technocrats themselves.

If you doubt that such a theme is blatantly in the movie, consider the following: the basic plot is good vs. evil, which is, in itself, an admirable plot-device. However, it is the film's method of depicting evil which broadcasts an anti-capitalist theme. For what is it about the villain of this film that makes him evil? The villain is the person who has framed Roger Rabbit. Admittedly, this is a horrible thing. But he has framed Roger in order to accomplish a certain goal: the destruction of Toon Town (an animated neighborhood where living cartoon characters, Toons, live) to make room for progress.

That is, the villain (I won't tell who he is) has inside information about a freeway that's about to be built nearby. And he wishes to destroy Toon Town so that he can build gas stations, supermarkets, fast-food joints, etc., in order to capitalize on Freeway traffic. In one horrific speech — his voice maniacally screaming — the villain gives a detailed list of the things he wants to build. He mentions the gas stations, shopping malls, etc., and then growls: "It'll be beautiful!" The obvious meaning of this line is: only an evil or deranged person could ever consider things like stores and technology to be beautiful.

The movie is set back in the forties, before Freeways were well-known. After a Toon explains what a Freeway is to one of the good guys, the good

guy says: "Only a Toon could think up an idea as nutty as a Freeway!" The meaning of this line is that Freeways — which have increased economic efficiency and the standard of living for all — are a bad idea.

And how does the villain plan to destroy Toon Town? With "The Dip." "The Dip" is a noxious, chemical mixture of benzene and other hated substances — an ugly, bubbling yellow broth which looks suspiciously like chemical waste. Until "The Dip" was invented, it was thought impossible to kill a Toon (you know, drop a

piano on its head, it shakes it off).

So there is an obvious analogy used here to express the theme: evil capitalists, in the name of some greedy, destructive profit motive, are willing to harm others to attain their selfish goals. And the results of their technology, such as chemical wastes ("The Dip") will destroy all life. There is a final blow: near the end, some of the bad guys get killed by their own creation, "The Dip." Which shows us the film maker's wish that all of these evil businessmen (who plagues us ordinary folk with their unwanted chemical

wastes) would choke on a pile of nuclear waste.

As bad as all of this is, it would not be too harmful if it were an adult movie. But this is a movie that many children will see — children who are developing a fragile sense of right and wrong, children who should not be taught to hate reality and their means of survival. Unfortunately, this movie is not being abhorred because it is not uncommon; over the past six decades, we have been inundated by anti-materialistic themes in movies. And we wonder why there are so many left-

tist students today. Well, they saw these kind of movies as children, and the message hit home.

The hypocrisy of the film is blinding: here we have a multi-million dollar film, making a huge profit — a symbol of capitalism — denouncing the profit-motive and all that it requires.

So I find I must give the movie two ratings:

Animation: \*\*\*\* (four stars)

Morality: —O— (zero)

You decide which is more important.

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