

Luca is just good—and that's okay



Disney+

By TJ REID

For the Keizertimes

It has been clear for a long time now that Pixar is made up of people that like to set bars. To set a bar is impressive in and of itself, but even more admirable than that is a consistent determination to clear and raise that bar when it would sometimes be much easier to stumble through it, take your billions, and go home. It must be exhausting to expect so much from oneself, and such high standards often make the inevitable “good but not great” jumps appear worse than they really are. This was the metaphor that was on my mind when I watched *Luca*, Disney/Pixar’s latest offering, a film that takes a step back from the company’s usual grand ambitions and dares to simply be good.

There are a few things that we as audience members have come to expect of Pixar over the years after being consistently spoiled by them—creative plots, razor sharp writing, cutting-edge animation, and mature-yet-still-kid-friendly themes, to name a few. *Luca*, unfortunately, falls just a little bit short on most of these. The plot is simple and feels more than a little familiar, bringing to mind another ocean dweller



that wanted to be where the people are, and there aren’t too many of those special moments that make adults laugh as hard as the kids. I was not a big fan of the animation either, particularly the goofy character models. Finally, the themes essentially boil down to accepting others, being a good parent, and being a good friend. All of this is important stuff, of course, but definitely less ambitious than the heavy themes explored in previous Pixar movies like *Toy Story*, *Inside Out*, *Coco*, and *Soul*.

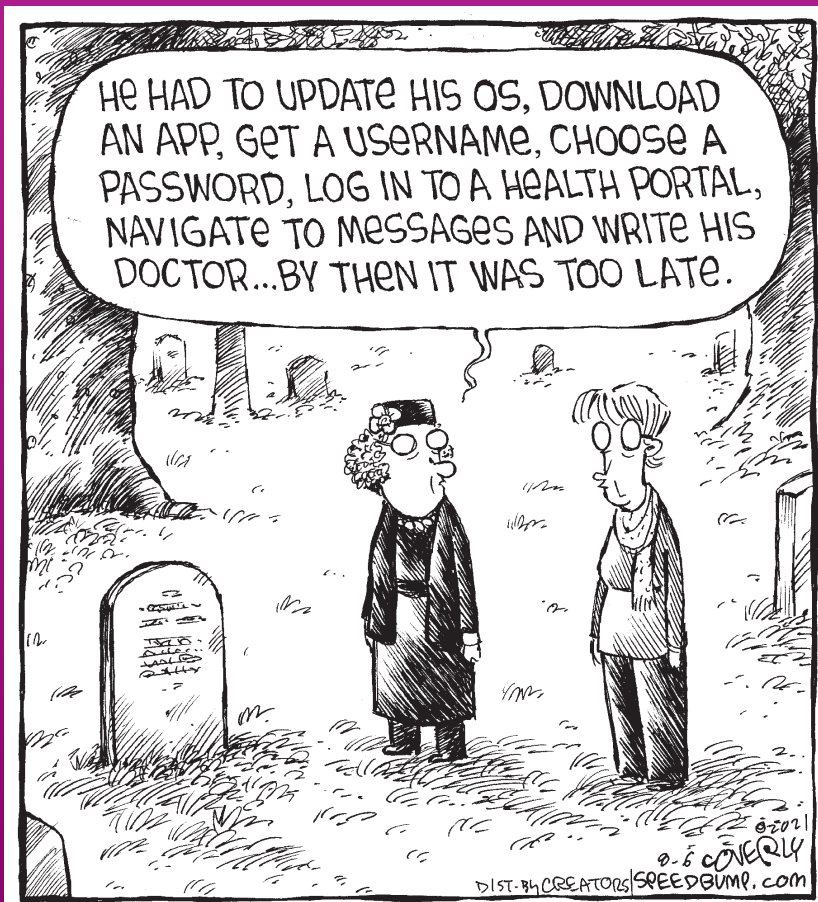
But let me be perfectly clear: this movie is not bad. It is, in fact, quite enjoyable, funny, and heartwarming. The voice acting is predictably great, the overall mood and feel is relaxed and vibrant (and Italian!), and even though I wasn’t a fan of the animation didn’t mean the animation was bad—things still pop, and I don’t think that water has ever been better

portrayed in CG than it is here. Perhaps the best compliment that I can give *Luca*, however, is the fact that my six-year-old nephew (who still sometimes has a hard time paying attention to the entirety of a feature-length movie) has watched it twice within the last week. All this to say that wholly original plots, an abundance of funny moments, and cathartic deep-dives into the human psyche do not necessarily make for a great film-- it’s

just that the relative lack of one or two of these keeps *Luca* from measuring up to the best of the best. If this movie had been made by any “lesser” studio I would be singing its praises non-stop from the top of a mountain. But as it came from Pixar, I can see it only being remembered up until their next gut-wrenching film about, I dunno, anthropomorphic shoes or something.

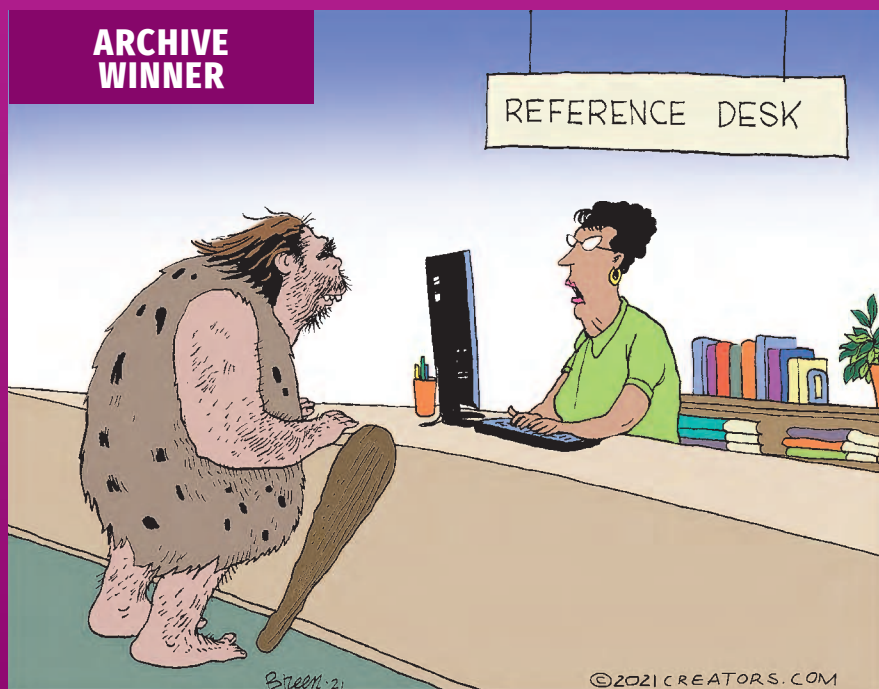
Luca is now available on Disney+.

Speed Bump By DAVE COVERLY



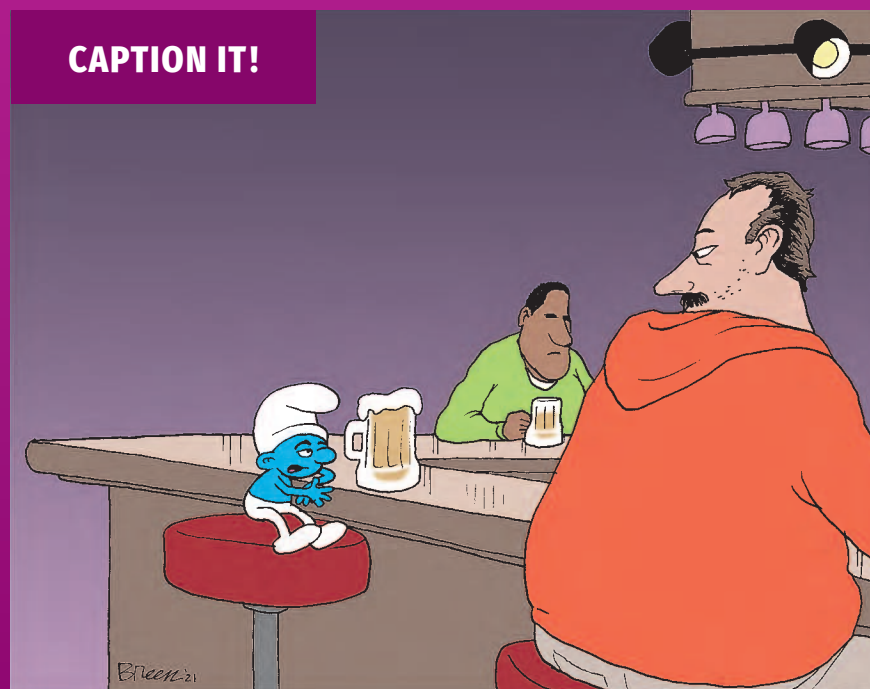
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