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## 'Luca' dives into the joy of friendship

BY MAKENZIE WHITTLE

The Bulletin

**P**icture it, the Italian Riviera in the 1950s, a young sea creature dreams of seeing the world beyond his front door in another Pixar movie that seems to pull in every character trope from their repertoire but still manages to be heartfelt and an all-around perfect summer movie.

"Luca" certainly isn't breaking any ground with the literal fish out of water, coming-of-age story, but it really doesn't matter. Is it as momentous as say, "Toy Story" or as sob-inducing as "Inside Out?" No. But it manages to be just as much of a joy to watch as the others.

Kicking off with classic '50s Italian pop songs and credits written in Italian, we are immediately immersed in this summer by the sea before going subsurface where we meet the young sea monster and farm boy

Luca (voiced by Jacob Tremblay) who, like every teenager questions the rules set in place by his loving parents (voiced by Maya Rudolph and Jim Gaffigan) and dreams of the world where the people are — wrong movie, but you get the idea. The world on the surface is dangerous, his parents say, and while sea monsters change their appearance when dry, the threat of exposure and death is a constant concern.

When Luca stumbles upon some human items near the "pasture" he meets Alberto (voiced by Jack Dylan Grazer), a cool and adventurous older boy who easily walks onto land, transforming from his aquatic persona to his humanoid one, pulling Luca up with him.

On the surface and in full human form, Luca sees what he's been missing and even after scampering back home, he dreams of seeing the sun and feeling the breeze on his face



Disney+

A scene from "Luca" now streaming on Disney+.

again. So, he sneaks back to hang out with his new friend daily as they adventure, invent and play together on the small island.

But Luca's parents eventually catch him and threaten to send him to The Deep with his uncle Ugo (voiced by Sacha Baron Cohen). So, Luca swims/runs back to Alberto and the two decide to go to the small village, find a Vespa and run away together. But getting a Vespa is harder than it looks and so they befriend a quirky girl named Giulia (voiced by Emma Berman) who inspires them to join her team in a triathlon composing of swimming, biking and eating pasta the fastest against the nasty Ercole (voiced by Saverio Raimondo) and win the money to buy the scooter.

The three instantly become friends, and Giulia invites them to stay with her and her father, the imposing-looking fisherman Massimo (voiced by Marco Barricelli) who has a vendetta along with the rest of the village against sea monsters. So, both boys must keep their identities a secret at all costs, while Luca's friendship with Giulia deepens and Alberto quickly becomes jealous.

There's nothing new in the story, and it's predictable and full of characters we've seen time and time again including the overprotective mom, the oblivious dad, the abandoned kid who says he's fine on his own (he's not), the "good boy" who discovers who he truly is, the imposing dad who's actually a big softie, the quirky/weird redhead and even the wise-cracking grandma. But again, it doesn't seem to matter that this is probably the least ambitious Pixar movie because "Luca" is still

### More Information

"Luca"

100 minutes

Rated PG for some thematic elements, brief violence, rude humor, language.



fun to watch and has a lot of heart behind it from its authentic feel of the place (director and co-writer Enrico Casarosa is from Genoa and many of the characters are voiced by Italian or Italian-American actors).

The story has some pretty obvious, though mostly unintentional allegories to "otherness" (the internet is full of think pieces on the queerness of the film, and rightly so) most notably about finding out who you are and finding a community or a family that accepts you for exactly the way you are. While they are obvious, they are still sweet and genuinely nice to see reflected on screen. However, it seems to have a hard time committing to those through lines of acceptance and it comes out slightly more frivolous than it should have been.

The themes don't come close to the deep emotions of other recent Pixar movies, but that's just fine. Sometimes, we just need a little palate cleanser about friendship and finding your people in this time of feeling incredibly isolated. "Luca" is just the palate cleanser we need with its unabashed joy.

■ Reporter: 541-383-0304, mwhittle@bendbulletin.com

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