

The Incredibles lives up to name

 by Lisa Fitch
 Entertainment reviewer

Pixar seems to never miss a beat, even when the company isn't animating its typical critter-filled fairy tale. While not as magical and whimsical as Pixar's past efforts (*Finding Nemo* and *Toy Story*), director Brad Bird's brain-child *The Incredibles* takes a more mature turn, especially as Pixar's first movie with a PG rating.

Being middle-aged is a drag, just ask Bob Parr. The former Mr. Incredible (voiced by Craig Nelson) and his wife, Elastigirl (Holly Hunter), are forced to retire from the superhero life of fighting crime and saving lives to be typical suburbanites with their moody teenage daughter Violet (Sarah Vowell), energetic son Dash (Spencer Fox), and baby boy Jack-Jack (Eli Fucile, Maeve Andrews). Bob is now an overweight cubicle drone working for a less-than-credible insurance company. His flexible wife, Helen, is stuck at home to raise the kids, who tend to express themselves by using their super-powers instead of words. Bob, bored of the nine-to-five torture of his job, joins friend and former superhero Frozone (Samuel L. Jackson) to relive the old days by tackling minor superhero stunts around town. This escapade eventually leads to Mr. Incredible taking up his mantle again, which causes trouble for the rest of the Parr family by the hands of the mysterious villain Syndrome (Jason Lee).

The story of *The Incredibles* may not be as heartwarming as *Finding Nemo* or *Monster's Inc.*, but it's a different

type of film because it takes its cues from various comic books and its style from old Bond flicks. While Bird is not an avid comic book fan, he definitely pays homage to the Fantastic Four, X-men, and especially the comic *The Watchmen* by Alan Moore, which centers on a group of retired superheroes in a world where vigilante work is prohibited by the government. Even if viewers don't take

notice of the numerous cultural references, the visuals and artificial chemistry portray them well.

Pixar still secures its position as the top animation house in the business with *The Incredibles* by topping Dreamworks recent *Shrek* with first-rate CGI (computer generated imagery). Humans take the stage this time and the result is an exaggerated form of the human physique, which gives the characters more of cartoon-feel than in previous movies. Pixar has done a wonderful job preventing the "mannequin-effect" in its super powered characters by making their movements fluid and believable, instead of the stiff and jerky movements that have forever plagued animated humans. As always, Pixar was excellent with its choices for voice-casting the characters in *The Incredibles*, and they all successfully deliver Pixar's trademark witty dialogue with such grace that people become attached to Bird's characters.

Even though *The Incredibles* is set in a fictional world, many of its underlying themes are present in our own world. Much of the movie deals with the search for identity and the suppression others face when their identities aren't accepted by society. The Parrs avoid this reality by surrounding the family in secrecy and the concept of being normal. While *The Incredibles* doesn't take a stand on the political incorrectness of the situation, the message is still there, and it's that depth that sets *The Incredibles* apart from the typical fairy tale.



Graphic by Lisa Fitch

Encore, Shady

 by Monica Chhadia
 Entertainment reviewer

The mischievous and talented white rapper has once again taken the world by storm. His new album *Encore* was originally scheduled to be released November 16, but the album was delayed due to fan eagerness he re-anticipated album Friday, November 19.

Encore throws insulting yet comical jokes towards Michael Jackson, Madonna, Pee Wee Herman, M.C. Hammer, Benzino, Ja Rule, and that oh-so-great President of ours. *Encore* sets the record straight on how the rapper truly feels about all these individuals. For instance, the track "Mosh" illustrates Eminem's opinion on President Bush and his principles. With lyrics like "...Let him go fight his own war/Let him impress daddy that way ... No more blood for oil," Slim discusses his views that the President is leading our country into more destruction. The rapper did indeed get out and vote in the Presidential election, and he has made his chosen candidate clear through his words.

As the number one song in America right now, "Just Lose It" is truly a song that rap fanatics and avoiders can enjoy. Eminem jokes about Michael Jackson's child-molestation accusations in the music video, and while the jokes are all in good humor, Jackson apparently failed to see the humor when

he attempted to get the song and music video banned.

A track that really stood out on the record was "Like Toy Soldiers," which addresses the 50 Cent and Ja Rule arguments. In the song, Eminem battles the cruel words of Ja Rule. The angry, protective father came into the confrontation when Ja Rule verbally attacked Eminem's 8-year-old daughter Hailie in one of his freestyles, foreshadowing an unfavorable future for the young girl.

As far as competing with his last albums, *Encore* is just another part of Eminem's life story unfolding. His first CD, *The Marshall Mathers LP*, was to introduce the white rapper to the world. *The Eminem Show* took fans deep into the comical mind of Slim Shady, who expressed his sarcasm with topics such as mother-killing, wife-cheating, and singing-for-the-moment. *Encore* delivers the more personal, political, and angry life of Marshall Mathers. Lyrics wise, he never seems to disappoint his fans. His lyrics are powerful, meaningful, and he shares his dramatic past experiences to shed a tear or two.

On top of having 23 remarkable songs, the album includes a bonus CD to satisfy fans all the more. *Encore* is no exception to Eminem's excellence of his former albums. This 32-year-old rapper isn't going anywhere; the fire is just beginning to burn, and Eminem still has many demons to battle.

Halo 2 meets expectations

 by Dave Specha
 Entertainment reviewer

Halo 2 may have taken over three years to complete and had tremendously large shoes to fill, following up the best-selling XBOX game in the system's history: *Halo: Combat Evolved*, but its commercial success was not in doubt. It sold an estimated 2.4 million copies on its first day, making more money in 24 hours (an estimated \$125 million) than most blockbuster films do in their opening weekends.

But while everyone from the 10 year-old down the street to Buffalo Bills' Willis McGahee was talking about the game, the important question still remained unanswered: Did the game live up to the hype?

Halo 2 could not meet all the gamer's seemingly impossible expectations, but the game is still remarkable. Though the outstanding graphics do not feel like a large upgrade, when compared to the original Halo, the game looks even more life-like. Players can now choose to play as human (Spartan) or alien (Elite) and can personalize their characters for a unique look. The sequel received the same Mature-rating as the original, but the fighting and bloodshed is more realistic and intense. The design team at Bungie did a good job of not making it the game's focal point, like in the *Grand Theft Auto* series.

The sound is excellent and can be used to a player's advantage to identify where he is being shot from if he is playing on surround sound. The single player music is used effectively to increase tension and gives the game a bit of a movie-feel.

Players can now play online via XBOX live, which allows up to 16 players to play on one map in various games. The addition of more players and more on-screen indicators makes the game seem more frantic (like the *Unreal Tournament* series) and feels like information overload on the player, but wise selection of game options allows the gamer to take full advantage of the information appearing all over his screen. The multiplayer scenarios are not original for games of this genre, but the multiple pages of options allow gamers to

create hundreds of unique variations on their favorite games. Poor scenario and option selections are possible and can occur regularly when playing multiplayer, but some tinkering with different options leads to a far more enjoyable game. However, the new weaponry and vehicles are the most innovative and exciting addition to *Halo 2*.

The obvious advantages of some weapons have been eliminated, meaning no single weapon dominates all fighting situations, something that commonly happens in first person shooters. The players are now able to carry and fire two smaller weapons at the same time, which makes less powerful guns far more effective. The new additions (especially the ridiculously entertaining energy sword) keep gamers searching for their favorite combination of weapons.

The vehicles from the previous *Halo* return, along with more alien weapons that greatly add to the multiplayer experience. The alien hang glider is the most entertaining new vehicle, but Bungie did an excellent job of making the vehicles fairly even and more complex. All take damage realistically, can be overtaken by a player on foot, (two new features that were lacking in the original) and have features that make fighting between vehicles more complex and interesting, such as boosts and power slides.

Everything in *Halo 2* seems to have an Achilles heel, which allows for an interesting use of strategy and teamwork, which are usually lacking from first person shooters.

The game's single player mode continues the rather intriguing storyline of the first game, with Master Chief returning from Halo to defend Earth, but its shortness will disappoint some. It will take most gamers under 10 hours to complete the game and the cliffhanger ending is largely unsatisfying.

The second edition in the *Halo* series is not nearly as innovative as the first, but it does an excellent job building upon the tall shoulders of the original. It is not the perfect game, but until one is created, *Halo 2* is the closest the gaming industry has come to date.

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