

Sonic Movie 3 Review

By Thermite/Nicole

The 3rd Sonic movie is an adaptation of Sonic Adventure 2, which introduces Shadow the Hedgehog to the movie universe. At first, I was concerned that his backstory and darker attitude would either be mishandled or played off as a joke, especially given Movie Sonic's tendency to make unfunny wisecracks at inappropriate times. However, this film surprised me – Sonic and Shadow's contrasting personalities are used to great effect, with their clashes bringing the whole film together. Along with exploring this tonal contrast, I'll explain the one thing that I dislike about this film and explore the way the movie cleverly tweaked Game Shadow's story.

Sonic's jokes and one-liners work well in this film. They feel less like the writers falling back on a default "young speedster" personality and more like an intentional decision. Sonic's light-hearted personality serves to contrast with Shadow's more serious attitude. Their contrast creates huge tone shifts, but these also work well – they emphasize the contrast between the family Sonic's found and everything Shadow lost. It works effectively during the first half of the movie, with Sonic's scenes showing him making bad jokes and playing off of his family,

while Shadow's scenes show him killing everyone he sees or just asking Gerald Robotnik what to do next (which typically involves more destruction).

The way Sonic's and Shadow's fights change throughout the film shows off their changing worldviews. For instance, their initial fight in Tokyo helps show that they're on completely different pages. The film attempts to fuse together the two tones, but neither Hedgehog cooperates. Sonic tries using his lighter tone to break through to Shadow with jokes and quips, then tries to connect with Shadow, similar to what he did with Knuckles in the 2nd movie, but Shadow isn't having any of it, even remarking that Sonic's chatter makes Shadow want to hit him harder. After the Tokyo fight, they don't interact much until Shadow "kills" Tom. In one move, Shadow's forced the more serious tones from his scenes onto Sonic's side, which is why the Super Sonic vs. Super Shadow fight works so well. This time, their two tones don't clash because they have the same tone. It's a similar deal for when they reconcile, with the tone leaning more towards Sonic's side and Shadow playing off of Sonic's lame jokes, without completely losing his essence. In other words, the two main tones of the movie blend together during Sonic and Shadow's interactions in the 2nd half of the movie which

elegantly sells that Sonic truly understands Shadow's desire for revenge and that Shadow understands how Sonic's managed to let go of his pain.

Sonic and Shadow fusing the two tones of the movie only works because we get tiny hints that Shadow's a genuinely good person under all his edges and that Sonic could turn vengeful, like Shadow, if he lost somebody close to him.

With Shadow, we have the flashbacks with Maria to humanize him, but present-day Shadow gets some humanizing moments too, like the Telenovela gag. He rightfully remarks that the woman shouldn't put up with getting treated like a prize by the two men in the show. Shadow then suggests that she should kill the two men. It's small, but a perfect representation of Shadow's morals at this point – his heart's in the right place, but his want for retribution and "justice" is so strong that it completely twists his actions.

With Sonic, we get hints at his darker side from a couple of scenes before Tom "dies". Sonic's genuine desperation, sold by Ben Schwartz's solid voice acting, gives him the strength to break free from the gravity trap when he sees Tom and Maddie nearly get crushed by falling debris. Seeing his loved ones in danger drives Sonic to do incredible things, which makes his attitude shift, when Tom gets "killed", more believable.

Incidentally, the gravity trap scene is also a brilliant distillation of GUN's, Robotnik's, and Sonic's motives. GUN only trusts themselves to keep everyone safe and they distrust both Sonic and Robotnik, so the GUN lady resists the increased gravity and slides towards the keycard. Robotnik wants to please the family that he's been missing for so long, which is why he too slides towards the keycard – this is made clearer by Gerald cheering him on as he goes. Meanwhile, Sonic doesn't give a damn about the keycard and is only moved to action when Tom and Maddie are in danger.

The duality between Sonic and Shadow are, on the surface, emphasized through the duality between Gerald Robotnik and Ivo Robotnik. Sonic and Ivo are both from the present day and both constantly make inappropriate one-liners, while Gerald/Shadow are their counterparts from 50 years ago who've experienced actual loss and have serious motivations. This, however, is where the movie somewhat drops the ball.

I'm most conflicted about Robotnik in this movie. I think this is the funniest Robotnik out of all three Sonic movies – it helps that Jim Carrey gets to play off of himself for many gags and bits. In the first movie, most of Robotnik's lines were sorta lame and they got slightly

better in Sonic 2. Even if most of Robotnik's gags didn't land for you in Sonic 3, it is at least easy to see that he makes way more attempts here and more of the jokes land than in the previous films.

On the other hand, Gerald and Ivo are at the heart of the bad tonal whiplash in this film. Most of the time, it's because both of them are in perpetual "unserious mode". The duality between Sonic and Shadow only works when their scenes can contrast cleanly with each other, Shadow's seriousness, followed by Sonic's unseriousness. However, when Sonic's unseriousness is followed by the Robotniks' unseriousness during the heist segment, it doesn't work at all.

It's even worse during the last half of the movie. If Gerald turned serious once he revealed his plan to destroy the world, I wouldn't be as upset - I'd be able to write off his behavior during the first half of the film as an act to trick Ivo into getting him what he wants. But Gerald's actions during the last segment still feel just as unserious, with him jumping comically when Eggman shocks him, pulling out weird cartoonish gadgets, and spanking Eggman in a weird slapstick scene. It would've been fine if it were just Ivo pulling out the wacky gadgets and acting goofy, as it'd play into the duality between Sonic and Shadow, but both of them act silly, and it completely derails everything. It doesn't help

that the Robotnik slapstick act is placed right next to Sonic and Shadow's very personal conflict. Instead of functioning like an elegant contrast between a lighthearted and a serious scene, like Sonic's and Shadow's scenes from earlier in the film, it instead undermines Sonic/Shadow's serious scene. Sonic and Shadow are *already* fusing the two major tones of the movie, so the Robotniks' shenanigans only distract from what Sonic and Shadow are doing.

I would've been happy about Gerald staying alive, instead of being dead like in Sonic Adventure 2, but given how he's written in this film, I would've preferred if he stayed dead. That said, I am happy with all of the other changes made from Sonic Adventure 2.

I like the changes they made to Shadow's backstory and the way they develop his relationship with Maria. Her dying wish for Shadow was cut entirely – instead of Gerald's meddling warping Maria's final words, thus putting Shadow on course for revenge on Maria's behalf, they just don't give her *any* dramatic final lines. Maria getting killed is *more* than enough for Shadow to want revenge, which also gives Shadow more autonomy – instead of unthinkingly obeying Maria's last words, he's getting revenge because he wants revenge.

Instead of only getting Maria's final words and one other flashback scene, we get *multiple* flashbacks to Maria, which fleshes out her friendship with Shadow. It shows how much time they spent together and that they essentially *did everything* together. Incidentally, I love the scene where Maria ties herself to Shadow as he starts running. At this point in the movie, we *know* how powerful he is, but the effects and animation show how much Shadow's holding back to avoid hurting her. It's a much more personal connection than what you get in Sonic Adventure 2 – the game shows you Maria and tells you that Shadow loved her. In this film, their friendship feels *real*.

Maria's death, meanwhile, feels less personal, and that works to the film's benefit. In the games, Maria gets shot by a GUN soldier. In the movie, the soldier accidentally shoots something flammable, which kills Maria and causes a huge explosion. The fact that it was an accident changes everything – not only does it make GUN appear less malicious, but it also explains why Shadow doesn't specifically go after the GUN soldier who killed Maria. Shadow *remembers* what happened and who was present – he's capable of person-specific vengeance. It's why he's completely fine with killing Commander Walters but hesitates once he realizes that he's actually "killed" Tom. Instead of a single rogue

soldier, it was a conflict between multiple people that ended up killing his best friend. In Shadow's eyes, those senseless conflicts will only cause more heartbreak and pain in the future, which is why all of humanity needs to go.

The smaller touches also went a long way – the whole Chao Garden was a great way to acknowledge this beloved feature of Sonic Adventure 2 without having to explain why these little creatures made of Chaos Energy are walking around. Same goes for Knuckles' fear of ghosts – it's a fun way of acknowledging Knuckles' fights with the Ghosts in Pumpkin Hill during Sonic Adventure 2 without completely derailing the story. The music was also great - I'm glad that they're getting comfortable using actual Sonic music/melodies. I nearly jumped out of my chair when the acoustic guitar in the first scene played Live and Learn and lost my mind later in the movie when they brought in full orchestral Live and Learn with the actual vocals. According to the credits, Escape from the City was somewhere in the film, but I didn't notice it. I'm glad that it's there, but it would've been cool if it were more noticeable.

All in all, this is easily the best Sonic film – the changes they made from Sonic Adventure 2 made complete sense, the way they utilized an

annoyance from the previous films, Sonic's personality, was brilliant, and the contrast between Sonic and Shadow's personalities brings the whole film together, despite the Robotniks somewhat undermining them. The improved story and impressive action come together to make this my favorite Sonic Movie - and now I trust them to do even better with the 4th one.