

= Speed Racer ( film ) =

Speed Racer is a 2008 American sports action @-@ comedy film based on the Japanese anime and manga series of the same name by Tatsunoko Productions . The film was written and directed by The Wachowski Brothers , [ n 1 ] and stars Emile Hirsch , Christina Ricci , John Goodman , Susan Sarandon , Matthew Fox , Benno Fürmann , Hiroyuki Sanada , Rain and Richard Roundtree . The plot revolves around Speed Racer , an 18 @-@ year @-@ old automobile racer who follows his apparently deceased brother 's career . His choice to remain loyal to his family and their company Racer Motors causes difficulties after he refuses a contract offered by E.P. Arnold Royalton , the owner of Royalton Industries .

The film had been in development since 1992 , changing actors , writers and directors until 2006 , when producer Joel Silver and the Wachowskis collaborated to begin production on Speed Racer as a family film . Speed Racer was shot between early June and late August 2007 in and around Potsdam and Berlin , at an estimated budget of \$ 120 million . The film score was composed by Michael Giacchino , and the film 's soundtrack , which contains the sound effects and theme song from the original series , was released on May 6 , 2008 .

Speed Racer premiered on April 26 , 2008 at the Nokia Theater , and was released in regular theaters in North America on May 9 , 2008 . Although it grossed over \$ 93 million , it was considered a box office bomb due to its production cost . It was subsequently nominated in multiple categories at the Teen Choice Awards , and was nominated for the Golden Raspberry Awards . The film was criticized for its storyline , characters and dialogue but received praise for its capacity to entertain the target audience and the performance of its cast . Speed Racer also divided critics over its use of special effects . The film received mostly negative reviews by the time of its release . Years later , however , commentators called it a cult and underrated film .

= = Plot = =

Speed Racer is an 18 @-@ year @-@ old whose life and love has always been automobile racing . His parents Pops and Mom run the independent Racer Motors , in which his brother Spritle , mechanic Sparky , and girlfriend Trixie are also involved . As a child Speed idolized his record @-@ setting older brother , Rex Racer , who was killed while racing in the Casa Cristo 5000 , a deadly cross @-@ country racing rally . Now embarking on his own career , Speed Racer is quickly sweeping the racing world with his skill behind the wheel of his brother 's cars , the Mach 5 and his own Formula One car the Mach 6 , but remains primarily interested in the art of the race and the well @-@ being of his family .

E.P. Arnold Royalton , owner of conglomerate Royalton Industries , offers Speed an astoundingly luxurious lifestyle in exchange for signing to race with him . Speed is tempted but declines due to his father 's distrust of power @-@ hungry corporations . Angered , Royalton reveals that for many years the key races have been fixed by corporate interests , including Royalton himself , to gain profits . Royalton takes out his anger on Speed by having his drivers force Speed into a crash that destroys the Mach 6 and suing Racer Motors for intellectual property infringement . Speed gets an opportunity to retaliate through Inspector Detector , head of a corporate crimes division . Racer Taejo Togokahn says that he has evidence that could indict Royalton but will only offer it up if Speed and the mysterious masked Racer X agree to race on his team in the Casa Cristo 5000 . Taejo says that a win could substantially raise the stock price of his family 's racing business , blocking a Royalton @-@ arranged buyout . Speed agrees but keeps his decision secret from his family , and Inspector Detector 's team makes several defensive modifications to the Mach 5 to assist Speed in the rally .

After they drive together and work naturally as a team , Speed begins to suspect that Racer X is actually his brother Rex in disguise . His family discovers that he has entered the race and agree to support him . With the help of his family and Trixie , Speed defeats many brutal racers who have been bribed by fixer Cruncher Block to stop him , and overcomes seemingly insurmountable obstacles to win the race . However , Taejo 's arrangement is revealed to be a sham , as he was

only interested in increasing the value of his family 's company so that they could profit from Royalton 's buyout . An angry Speed hits the track that he used to drive with his brother , and confronts Racer X with his suspicion that he is Rex . Racer X removes his mask , revealing an unfamiliar face , and tells Speed that Rex is indeed dead . Speed returns home , where Taejo 's sister Horuko Togokahn gives him Taejo 's automatic invitation to the Grand Prix , which Taejo had rejected . The Racer family bands together and builds the new Mach 6 in 32 hours .

Speed enters the Grand Prix against great odds : Royalton has placed a bounty on his head that the other drivers are eager to collect , and he is pitted against future Hall of Fame driver Jack " Cannonball " Taylor . Speed overcomes a slow start to catch up with Taylor , who uses a cheating device called a spearhook to latch the Mach 6 to his own car . Speed uses his jump jacks to expose the device to video cameras , causing Taylor to crash . Speed wins the race , having successfully exposed Royalton 's crimes . While Racer X watches it is revealed in a flashback montage that he really is Rex , who has faked his death and undergone plastic surgery to change his appearance as part of his plan to save his family and the sport of racing . He chooses not to reveal his identity to his family , declaring that he must live with his decision . The Racer family celebrates Speed 's victory as Speed and Trixie kiss , and Royalton is sent to jail .

= = Cast = =

Emile Hirsch as Speed Racer . Actors Joseph Gordon @-@ Levitt and Shia LaBeouf were previously considered for the role . To prepare for the role , Hirsch watched every Speed Racer episode and visited Lowe 's Motor Speedway , where he met with driver Jimmie Johnson.Nicholas Elia as young Speed Racer

Christina Ricci as Trixie , Speed 's girlfriend . Ricci was chosen over Elisha Cuthbert and Kate Mara.Ariel Winter as young Trixie

Matthew Fox as Racer X , a mysterious racer who is about 10 years older than Speed and hides his face .

Rain as Taejo Togokahn , a rookie racer

John Goodman as Pops Racer , Speed 's father

Susan Sarandon as Mom Racer , Speed 's mother

Scott Porter as Rex Racer , Speed 's older brother

Paulie Litt as Spritle Racer , Speed 's younger brother

Kick Gurry as Sparky , Speed 's mechanic and best friend

Chim Chim , Spritle 's pet chimpanzee and best friend is portrayed by two chimpanzees : " Kenzie " and " Willy " .

Nayo Wallace as Minx , a scientist and Racer X 's girlfriend

Benno Fürmann as Inspector Detector , head of the Corporate Crimes Division , Central Intelligence Bureau

Togo Igawa as Tetsuo Togokahn , Taejo and Horuko 's father , and a corporate rival to both Royalton and Musha

Yu Nan as Horuko Togokahn , Taejo Togokhan 's sister

Roger Allam as E.P. Arnold Royalton , the corrupt owner and CEO of Royalton Industries

HiroYuki Sanada as Mr. Musha , president and CEO of Musha Motors

Richard Roundtree as Ben Burns , a race commentator and former racing champion

John Benfield as Cruncher Block , a gang leader

Ralph Herforth as Jack " Cannonball " Taylor , a superstar racer sponsored by Royalton Industries  
Series originals Peter Fernandez and Corinne Orr appear as race announcers .

= = Production = =

= = = Development = = =

In September 1992 , Warner Bros. announced that it held the option to create a live action film adaptation of the Japanese anime and manga series Speed Racer , in development at Silver Pictures . In October 1994 , singer Henry Rollins was offered the role of Racer X. In June 1995 , Johnny Depp was cast into the lead role for Speed Racer , with production slated to begin the coming October , with filming to take place in California and Arizona . The following August , Depp requested time off to the studio for personal business , delaying production . However , due to an overly high budget , the same August , director Julien Temple left the project . Depp , without a director , also departed from the project . The studio considered director Gus Van Sant as a replacement for Temple , though it would not grant writing privileges to Van Sant . In December 1997 , the studio briefly hired Alfonso Cuarón as director . In the various incarnations of the project , screenwriters Marc Levin , Jennifer Flackett , J. J. Abrams , and Patrick Read Johnson had been hired to write scripts .

In September 2000 , Warner Bros. and producer Lauren Shuler Donner hired writer @-@ director Hype Williams to take the helm of the project . In October 2001 , the studio hired screenwriters Christian Gudegast and Paul Scheuring for \$ 1 @. @ 2 million split between them to write a script for the film . Eventually , without production getting under way , the director and the writers left the project . In June 2004 , Vince Vaughn spearheaded a revival of the project by presenting a take for the film that would develop the characters more strongly . Vaughn was cast as Racer X and was also attached to the project as an executive producer . With production never becoming active , Vaughn was eventually detached from the project .

== = Pre @-@ production == =

In October 2006 , directors Lana and Lilly Wachowski were brought on board by the studio to write and direct the film . Producer Joel Silver , who had collaborated with the Wachowski 's for V for Vendetta and The Matrix Trilogy , explained that they were hoping to reach a broader audience with a film that would not be rated R by the Motion Picture Association of America . Visual effects designer John Gaeta , who won an Academy Award for Best Visual Effects for the Wachowskis ' The Matrix , was brought in to help conceive making Speed Racer into a live @-@ action adaptation . Production was set to begin in summer 2007 in European locations for a summer 2008 release . In November 2006 , the release date for it was set for May 23 , 2008 . Producer Joel Silver described Speed Racer as a family film in line with the Wachowskis ' goal to reach a wider audience .

== = Filming == =

In February 2007 , the Wachowskis selected Babelsberg Studios in Potsdam , Germany to film . In the following March , Warner Bros. moved the release date two weeks earlier to May 9 , 2008 . The studio received a grant of \$ 12 @. @ 3 million from Germany 's new Federal Film Fund , the largest yet from the organization , for its production in the Berlin @-@ Brandenburg region . The amount was later increased to \$ 13 million . Principal photography commenced on June 5 , 2007 in Berlin , and was shot entirely against greenscreen , lasting 60 days . The Wachowskis filmed in high @-@ definition video for the first time . With the camera , the Wachowskis used a layering approach that would put both the foreground and the background in focus to give it the appearance of real @-@ life anime . The film has a " retro future " look , according to Silver . Filming concluded on August 25 , 2007 .

== = Music == =

In 2007 , the Wachowskis purchased the rights to the sound effects and theme song of the television series for use in the film . The film 's soundtrack was composed by Michael Giacchino , performed by Hollywood Studio Symphony and released by Varèse Sarabande . It was used along with orchestral score ; Warner Bros. added an updated version of the " Go , Speed Racer , Go " theme song , which plays during the end credits , and was produced by Ali Dee Theodore and

Jason Gleed , and performed by Ali Dee and the Deekompressors . Razor & Tie released this version as an extended play on January 1 , 2008 to promote the film 's release , and as a single released along with film 's soundtrack on May 6 , 2008 .

== Animal cruelty ==

During its production , animal rights group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals ( PETA ) made allegations of animal cruelty against the film , reporting that one of the two chimpanzees used in the production was allegedly beaten after biting an actor . The incident was confirmed by the American Humane Association ( AHA ) Animal Safety Representative on the set , who reported that the stand @-@ in for the Spritle character portrayed by Litt had been bitten without provocation . The AHA representative also reported that " toward the end of filming , during a training session in the presence of the American Humane Representative , the trainer , in an uncontrolled impulse , hit the chimpanzee . " The AHA Film Unit referred to this abuse as " completely inexcusable and unacceptable behavior in the use of any animal . " The AHA has rated Speed Racer " Unacceptable " chiefly because of this incident , with AHA noting " the aforementioned training incident tarnishes the excellent work of the rest of production " and that it " has no method of separating the actions of one individual in the employ of a production from the production as a whole . "

== Release and reception ==

== Marketing ==

The Los Angeles Times estimated that nearly 5 @, @ 000 Speed Racer film @-@ related products were licensed by Warner Bros. The film was backed by multiple promotional partners with over \$ 80 million in marketing support . The partners include General Mills , McDonald 's , Target , Topps , Esurance , Mattel , Lego and Petrobras . The film also received support from companies outside of America in an attempt to attract international audiences . With early support before the film 's release , the studio provided 3D computer models of the Speed Racer vehicle Mach 5 to the companies so they could accurately render the vehicle in their merchandise .

Mattel produced toys based on the film through several divisions . Hot Wheels produced die @-@ cast vehicles , race sets and track sets . Tyco produced remote @-@ controlled Mach 5s and racing sets . Radica Games produced video games in which players can use a car wheel . The products became available in March 2008 . Also , the Lego Company produced four Lego sets based on the movie . As part of the General Mills promotional tie @-@ in , during the 2008 Crown Royal Presents the Dan Lowry 400 , part of the 2008 NASCAR Sprint Cup season , the famous # 43 Dodge Charger of Petty Enterprises was transformed into a NASCAR Sprint Cup Series version of the Mach 5 , driven by Bobby Labonte .

Warner Bros. , through its Interactive Entertainment division , self @-@ published a video game based on Speed Racer , which was released on May 6 , 2008 on the Nintendo DS and Nintendo Wii , and was released on September 16 , 2008 for the PlayStation 2 . The original music for the Speed Racer video game was written by Winifred Phillips and produced by Winnie Waldron . The game was released on the Nintendo DS and Wii in May with the film 's theatrical release and was released on the PS2 in the fall to accompany the film 's DVD and Blu @-@ ray release . Due to a short development schedule , the studio chose not to develop games for the PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 .

== Box office ==

Speed Racer premiered on April 26 , 2008 during a \$ 500 @, @ 000 @-@ estimated event at the Nokia Theater in Los Angeles , where 4 @, @ 000 people attended . It was released in regular theaters on May 9 , 2008 , grossing \$ 18 @, @ 561 @, @ 337 in its opening weekend from around 6

@, @ 700 screens at 3 @, @ 606 theaters in the United States and Canada , ranking third at the box office behind Iron Man and What Happens in Vegas . In its second weekend it grossed \$ 8 @, @ 117 @, @ 459 and ranked fourth at the box office . The film closed its run on August 1 , 2008 with \$ 43 @, @ 945 @, @ 766 domestically and \$ 93 @, @ 945 @, @ 766 worldwide . Based on its total gross , it was considered a box office bomb . The results were well below studio expectations , given that the production costs of Speed Racer were estimated to be over \$ 120 million . Despite the low box office numbers , Warner Bros. remained optimistic about sales of associated products ranging from toys to tennis shoes . Brad Globe , president of Warner Bros. Consumer Products , expressed hope that " We 're still going to do very well with Speed Racer " , acknowledging that " a giant movie would have made it all a lot bigger " .

= = = Critical reception = = =

The review aggregate website Rotten Tomatoes ranked Speed Racer as " rotten " , with 39 % of its selected critics giving the film positive reviews , based on 208 reviews with an average rating of 5 @. @ 1 / 10 . The website 's consensus reads , " [ The Wachowskis ] have overloaded Speed Racer with headache @-@ inducing special effects , and neglected to develop a coherent storyline . " At Metacritic , which assigns a normalized rating out of 100 to reviews from mainstream critics , the film has received an average score of 37 out of 100 , which indicates " generally unfavorable reviews " , based on 37 reviews .

Writing for The Hollywood Reporter , Kirk Honeycutt called Speed Racer 's visual effects " stellar " , but stated it " proudly denies entry into its ultra @-@ bright world to all but gamers , fanboys and anime enthusiasts " . He criticized that story and character were " tossed aside " towards the " wearying " races . Todd McCarthy of Variety noted the target audience should be amused , but others might think the film " a cinematic pile @-@ up " , citing its implausibility and the lack of identifiable peril in the driving sequences . While noted viewers interested in CGI would appreciate it , McCarthy said the frame sometimes resembled " a kindergartner 's art class collage " . He had praise for the cinematography , the musical score , and the cast . Anime News Network 's Zac Bertschy also praised the cast , while saying the story is " as anyone would expect " , adding " the characters are all cardboard archetypes with Saturday Morning dialogue . " Speed Racer " sets out to honor and refresh a youthful enthusiasm from the past and winds up smothering the fun in self @-@ conscious grandiosity " , declared The New York Times 's A. O. Scott .

Glenn Kenny of Premiere criticized the film 's time @-@ shifting narrative and multiple storylines , saying it " yields heretofore undreamed of levels of narrative incoherence " . Kenny praised the film 's look , saying the " cheez @-@ whizziness " that others had criticised was " precisely the point " . He remarked the movie inspires even more thinking than The Matrix because of its " blatantly anti @-@ capitalist storylines " . Similarly , The New Yorker 's Anthony Lane said the film could still end up " bleached of fun " due to the theme mooted in The Matrix that all of us are being controlled . In Speed Racer , Lane argues , this comes in the form of villain Royalton , who " vows to crush [ Speed ] with ' the unassailable might of money . ' " He concluded some people may call it entertaining , but he " felt [ it ] like Pop fascism " . Jim Emerson , editor at the Chicago Sun @-@ Times , wrote that Speed Racer " is a manufactured widget , a packaged commodity that capitalizes on an anthropomorphized cartoon of Capitalist Evil in order to sell itself and its ancillary products " . It was said to be " the most tiresome piece of CGI ( Computer Generated Idiocy [ sic ] ) " of the " past couple of years " at the time of film 's release by Philip French , a The Guardian critic .

Conversely , IGN 's Todd Gilchrist gave a positive review , stating that Speed Racer " is not merely the best film that it could be , it 's pretty much exactly what it should be : full of exciting , brilliantly @-@ conceived races , primary @-@ color characterizations and an irresistible sense of fun " . He called Speed Racer " a masterpiece of its kind " , praising " the special effects extravaganza " and " the moment when the Wachowskis went from wunderkind directors to true auteurs " . Michael Phillips of the Chicago Tribune described Speed Racer as " buoyant pop entertainment and noted the Wachowskis respected " the themes of honor , dishonor , family loyalty and Visigoth @-@ inspired barbarism behind the wheel " of the original work . The cast is praised as being " earnest "

and " gently playful " . However , he stated that " it sags in its midsection " with unnecessary dialogue . Although it was said to be among the worst films of the year by Rebecca Murray of About.com , she included Speed Racer on her list of " Top 10 Action Movies of 2008 " , stating " the action sequences are definitely eye @-@ catching . " Time magazine included Speed Racer on its list of " The All @-@ Time 25 Best Sports Movies " and " Top 10 Movies of 2008 " . It said " Not every avant @-@ garde FX masterpiece receives instant audience validation " , described the film as " a rich , cartoonish dream : non @-@ stop Op art , and a triumph of virtual virtuosity . "

However , in later years , the film has appeared periodically on lists of underrated films or cult films . Speed Racer was elected the third most underrated film of the 2000s by Den of Geek 's N.P. Horton , which called it " a game @-@ changing film which redefined and reconceptualised the film form as we know it . " Nick Hyman , writing for Metacritic , included the film on its list of " movies that critics got wrong " calling it " a cult classic in the making " . It was described as " nearly unmatched [ ... ] insofar as action / adventure / family films go " by Alejandro Stepenberg from JoBlo.com , while Slate 's Chris Wade named it " an underrated masterpiece , " stating " they [ the Wachowskis ] made a brilliant visual cartoon that dares to ask that you take it seriously . " Annalee Newitz of io9 analyzed the ten reasons why she believes the film to be an " unsung masterpiece " ; among them , the visuals , the humor , and even its political themes . Tor.com 's Dexter Palmer considered the possibility that the film is a " misunderstood art film " , highlighting its color scheme that is a " pleasure " and the fact it does not try to seem real . Palmer lauded it because he does not think films must imitate reality , and ultimately said it is " an extreme reminder of what films , and especially fantasy and science fiction films , can place on screen " and that it is " a refreshing change of pace " in film industry .

= = = Awards and nominations = = =

Speed Racer was nominated at the Golden Trailer Awards for " Summer 2008 Blockbuster " , at the MTV Movie Award for " Best Summer Movie So Far " , at the Motion Picture Sound Editors Golden Reel Award for " Best Sound Editing : Sound Effects and Foley in a Feature Film " , at the Visual Effects Society Awards for " Outstanding Matte Paintings in a Feature Motion Picture " . At the 2008 Teen Choice Awards , Speed Racer was a nominee in the category of " Movie : Action Adventure " , " Movie Actor : Action Adventure " and " Movie Actress : Action Adventure " . On other hand , the film has also nominated for the 29th Golden Raspberry Awards in the category of Worst Prequel , Remake , Rip @-@ off or Sequel .

= = = Home media = = =

Warner Home Video released Speed Racer to DVD and Blu @-@ ray on September 16 , 2008 . The three @-@ disc set features the main feature and supplemental features on the first disc , the DVD game " Speed Racer Crucible Challenge " on the second disc , and a digital copy of the film on the third disc ? the last two being exclusive to the Blu @-@ ray release . The U.S. DVD sales reached \$ 6 @,@ 268 @,@ 301 and 390 @,@ 191 copies as of the first week , with a total consumer spending of \$ 14 @,@ 277 @,@ 546 and 900 @,@ 361 copies sold . The Blu @-@ ray version was re @-@ released on May 18 , 2010 .

= = Proposed sequel = =

Variety discussed a possible sequel , saying it could happen if Speed Racer has a good box office performance . In 2008 , a possible sequel was contemplated by the Wachowskis when Rain asked them why his character is so happy for Speed winning , and they replied it could be explained in the next film . Rain said he was hired for 3 years , while noting that doesn 't guarantee a sequel will be released . Christina Ricci also considered it a possibility ; she stated " When we [ the cast ] were all leaving , we were like ' write the sequel ! ' ' We want to come back ' . And they [ the Wachowskis ] were like , ' I know . I know . We 're going to . Don 't worry ' . " , adding she would like more action

scenes to her character . The producer Joel Silver said that the Wachowskis " have a great story idea for a sequel " but that it is " a great idea for a sequel if it makes sense to make it . "