

Movie Review: 'Bee Movie'

by Lee Grant

HOLLYWOOD - Hello, Jerry.

That greeting can only be for "Bee Movie" king bee Jerry Seinfeld, yada, yada, yada.

'BEE MOVIE' - In 'Bee Movie' Jerry Seinfeld is back as the animated voice of Barry B. Benson. CNS
Photo courtesy of Dream Works Animation. RATINGS

4 STARS - Excellent.

3 STARS - Worthy.

2 STARS - Mixed.

1 STAR - Poor.

0 - Forget It (a dog.) Who doesn't like "Seinfeld," the iconic TV sitcom that ran for nine seasons from '89 to '98? "I don't hear that," said the fastidious comedian, settling in for an early morning conversation, already dressed in immaculate jeans and a sport coat, tie and cowboy boots. "I normally get the fans. For them, the show has stood the test of time like an old car that still looks good."

And the fans remind him of favorite episodes like "the close talker," "the bad breaker-upper," "man hands," "shrinkage," "The Junior Mint," Elaine dancing, "muffin tops," "the Soup Nazi," "double-dipped chips," "the low talker."

Then there are the phrases lingering in the lexicon: "Hello Jerry, Hello Newman," "master of his domain," "we're not gay, not that there's anything wrong with that."

Seinfeld has been omnipresent pitching his new animated film, the charming and brightly conceived "Bee Movie." The TV show, though, lurks in his mind like a chocolate babka. "I remember every single minute of it," he said. "It was my whole life. I was breathing it. I lived at the show."

Over and over, he's asked how a TV program apparently about nothing ("it's the exact opposite, the show was about something") so captivated people. He responds with an answer borrowed from the late Jackie Gleason on the appeal of "The Honeymooners," another classic sitcom: "It's fun to watch."

Though not in the magical sphere of a "Finding Nemo" or "Ratatouille," "Bee Movie" is fun to watch. Seinfeld's Barry B. Benson (he wears sneakers, his antennae double as a cell phone) is a honeybee yearning to do something more with his life than be just another worker in the hive. So, he ventures out for his first view of the open-air world with a squadron of buff "pollen jockeys." Directors Simon J. Smith and Steve Hickner fashion an entire metropolis inside the hive - factory, suburbs, highways, condos - and New York City outside. Barry's foray into the Big Apple of blooming fall colors and Central Park's bountiful gardens is a roller coaster of stomach-in-the-throat dips and turns.

Flying about, he ends up in the apartment of Vanessa, a florist voiced by Renee Zellweger. Right off, he breaks Bee Law No. 1: Don't talk to humans.

An inter-species friendship blooms. Humans, he tells her, have plundered the work of bees and profited from honey production. Says one villainous beekeeper, "They make the honey and we make the money."

Litigation ensues, bees suing humans for years of exploitation. "When I'm done with the human race," says Barry, "they won't be able to say, 'Honey, I'm home' without paying a royalty."

"Bee Movie." Rated PG. Running time: 1 hour, 31 minutes. 3 stars.

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