## Film Close-Up: Emile Hirsch

by Joey\_Berlin

"Speed Racer" should turbo-boost the visibility of its talented star, Emile Hirsch. A stylistically bold adaptation of the classic '60s cartoon, the loud, fast and computer-enhanced film stars Hirsch as the white-knuckled speed demon who has high-octane fuel in his family bloodline. In fact, his given name actually is Speed Racer. The Wachowski brothers channeled their action and effects expertise from "The Matrix" movies into this whiplash-paced, kid-friendly film, which co-stars Christina Ricci, John Goodman and Susan Sarandon.

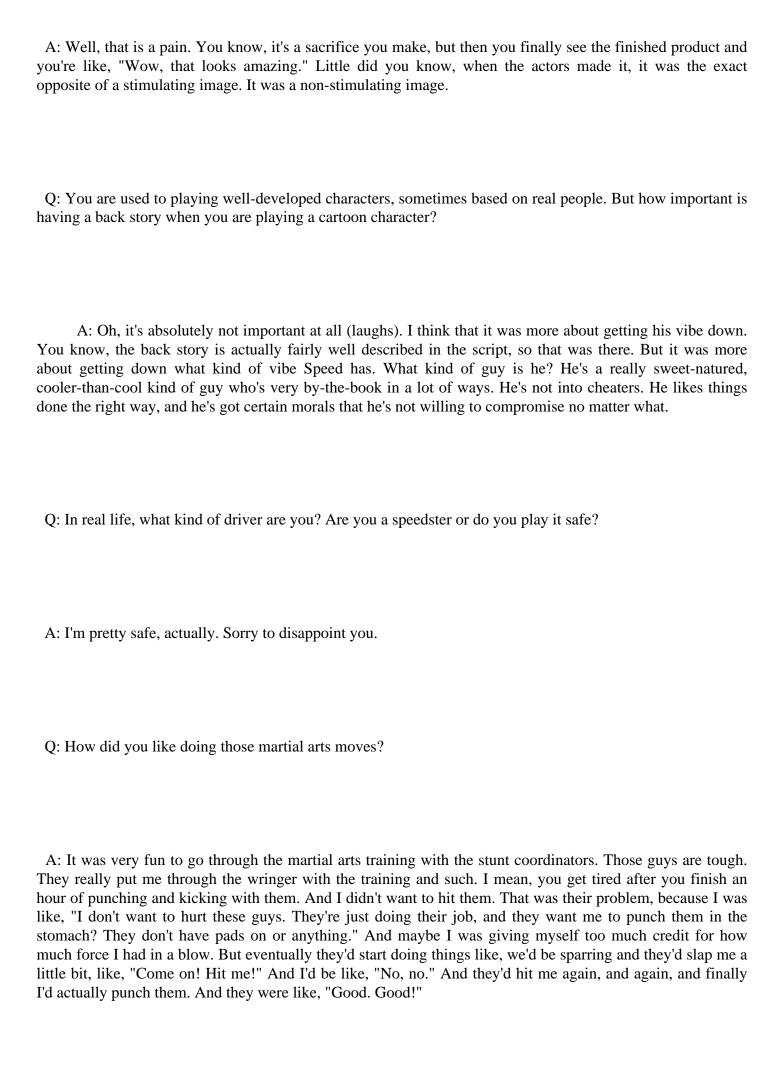
EMILE HIRSCH - Emile Hirsch is a white-knuckled speed demon in the action movie 'Speed Racer.' CNS Photo courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures. And Hirsch holds it all together in the title role. The likeable and charismatic 23-year-old Californian came from a showbiz family, breaking into acting with small roles in television at age 11. His first film was "The Dangerous Lives of Altar Boys" with Jodie Foster, followed by "The Emperor's Club" with Kevin Kline. Last year, there was Oscar buzz for Hirsch after his remarkable performance as a smart college student turned mountain man in Sean Penn's film "Into the Wild."

Hirsch will next appear with Penn in "Milk," a biopic of murdered gay-rights activist Harvey Milk.

Q: So much of the visuals in "Speed Racer" are computer-generated. Were you in a real car for much of the filming?

A: When I was filming in Europe, I didn't get behind the wheel of a car the entire time. It was all green screen. It was crazy. I mean, it was like being in warehouses with green walls everywhere, and imagining this whole fantasy world around you. It was a challenge. It was a mental challenge.

Q: Was it like going back to the bare basics of dramatic acting, or was it just a pain?



Q: It is rare for an actor to be in both a critically acclaimed drama and a big blockbuster so close together. Which direction would you like to head in the future?
A: I don't know. I hope to just read a wonderful script and to do it. There's not much to it other than that, I suppose. I mean, I could pontificate, but I'll resist. I never thought that I would do "Into the Wild" and I never thought that I would do "Speed Racer." I had no idea that either of those projects would ever come along. That's always how it is though, when you're acting. It's one of those things where you're always out of a job. Then you get one and you're working all the time, then you're done and you don't have a job again. You're legitimately out of work. You have no prospects and you never know what's going to come along.
Q: How did "Speed Racer" come along?
A: All of a sudden I got a call and it was like, "They're making 'Speed Racer." And I said, "They're making 'Speed Racer?' That's awesome! Who's going to direct it?" My manager Sam goes, "Well, the Wachowski brothers just committed to directing it." I was like, "Are you joking me? That is the craziest thing I've ever heard!" As soon as I heard that, I was like, "I would love to be in that film."
Q: Are they going to have an action figure of you as Speed Racer?
A: Oh yeah! I look like Dennis Quaid in my action figure, actually, circa '95. Which is a good thing. That's an upgrade for me.
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