

# Pixar's *Soul* Taps Into Viewer's Souls

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Disney Pixar's newest creation, *Soul*, brings a different view to how life should be lived.

The newest movie from Pixar Animation Studios, which was directed by Pete Docter, brought to the world a story that teaches about life's little moments. The story follows the life of Joe Gardner, voiced by Jamie Foxx. Joe is a rather ordinary man living life in the grand world of New York City. He's a part-time middle school music teacher just trying to get by. He has a dream of becoming a professional jazz musician, and his world revolves around his passion for jazz music.

When the film begins, Joe is offered a full-time job of middle school music teacher at his school, but he is apprehensive about accepting, still wanting to chase his dream of being a professional jazz musician. Later that day, he gets a call from a former student, Curley, who is now a jazz musician himself: he plays drums in a famous jazz musician's quartet in town. Curley explains that their regular pianist has skipped town, leaving them without a sufficient emergency replacement. He offers Joe a tryout with the quartet, and if he impresses the band's leader, who is one of Joe's jazz idols, then he can come back later in the night and play with the quartet at a show. Joe, finally thinking he has gotten his big break, is ecstatic about the opportunity.

Just as he thinks his luck has changed, however, he clumsily runs through the streets of New York City and experiences a bad fall. Suddenly, he awakens to find his soul and body have separated, and he is waiting to go into the "Great Beyond." Joe, not wanting to be dead on what he deems "the best day of his life," tries to escape, but soon falls into a place called the Great Before. Here, Joe is mistaken for a different "mentor" soul and learns he can get back to Earth with



**Joe Gardner, voiced by Jamie Foxx, in the newest Pixar film, *Soul*. Photo via IMDb.**

the help of any mentee soul who is not yet on Earth. Unfortunately for him, he gets stuck mentoring the most troublesome soul of all: Soul 22, voiced by Tina Fey. The story ensues from here, and Joe and Soul 22 work together to try and get Joe back to Earth. Although Joe does eventually succeed, it is not in the way he intended. Along the journey to correct another mishap, he learns important life lessons, most importantly to enjoy the little things in life and never take for granted all that he has around him.

The movie, which was released on Christmas day, was a trendsetter and history maker in several ways: it marked the first Pixar feature-length film not to be released worldwide to theaters and was released exclusively to Disney+ in countries that have the streaming service. The movie features other voice actors such as Questlove (as Curley), Graham Norton (Moonwind), Angela Bassett (Dorthea Williams), Daveed Diggs (Paul), and Rachel House (Terry), among others. The film also features a soundtrack of various jazz compositions, each fitting into a different part of the story.

The film can best be described, for those who may be somewhat of movie connoisseurs, as a mash up of *La La Land* and a Pixar animation style most closely resembling that seen in *Inside Out*. The film also seems to pull moments and images from other Pixar classics to contribute to the overall distinctness of the picture. The film is really unlike any other Pixar films in that it featured, for the first time, an adult human character as the main protagonist.

I thought that the movie was

rather tremendous: it had a great soundtrack, and an animation style which fans of Pixar films have grown to love over the years. It had a much heavier theme and overall meaning than some other Pixar films, and it was meant to hit home deep down, quite literally, in the viewer's souls. Frankly, this movie is sort of almost telling you to not watch this movie, to go out and enjoy all of the little things in life for what they really are, and to stop wasting your time when these things are not permanent. It makes viewers really ponder some of their life choices and the meaning of things in their life, long after the film is over.

There were some minor plot holes, but that is to be somewhat expected in something that is really also meant for kids to view and be able to comprehend. Other reviewers online have complained that the ending was kind of an easy-out end to the story and was a display of lazy writing, but I thought it wrapped up Joe's story rather nicely and left the rest of the events after to the viewer's imagination. I would rate this movie highly and would definitely recommend a watch for those interested.

Ultimately, *Soul* hits viewers right where it intends to --- in the soul.