I never ceased to be amazed at how they do it at Pixar. Year after year after year they keep putting out the best animated features of a generation. But why restrict it to just animation? Simply put, the storytellers at Pixar are some of the best writers in the entire entertainment business. These may be “cartoons”, but they are some of the most lovable and fully created characters you will ever see.

We know all the names so well; “Up”, “WALL-E”, “Ratatouille”, “Cars”, “The Incredibles”, “Finding Nemo”, “Monsters, Inc.”, “A Bug’s Life”, and the one that started it all: “Toy Story”, back in 1995, with the only sequel ever produced by Pixar, “Toy Story 2” being released in 1999.

So it has been 11 years since we’ve seen Woody, Buzz Lightyear, and the rest of Andy’s Toys. Andy is now growing up, and about to head to college…but the toys have stayed the same, and so has the quality of work done by Pixar, as “Toy Story 3” is another masterpiece; a brilliant combination of story and visuals that will leave all but the most stone-hearted with a lump in your throat at the end.

This is, by far, the deepest and most insightful of the series. The toys have been living their lives shut up in Andy’s toy chest for years; there is little need for a 17 year old for plastic dinosaurs, pull string cowboys, or slinky dogs. The toys are restless, even if they do still get out and about whenever no human is around. They’d love to be played with, but there is a sad sense of reality creeping into them: Andy no longer needs them. What will happen to them? Storage up in the attic until perhaps Andy has kids of his own? Donated? Or…their biggest fear…thrown away?

Here you see the genius of the Pixar writers. How could anyone over the age of 30 not identify with these toys? They may be made of plastic, but they still dread the unknown, and like any human, fear not being needed and no longer being important in anyone's eyes. Woody tries to keep their spirits up, but with only a few days left before Andy leaves home, they find themselves destined for the Attic. That's bad enough, but a misunderstanding finds them on the curb, headed for the dump, which leads to pure panic.

Escaping that fate, they find themselves at a local day care. They are initially elated to find that they will once again be wanted, but you never expect it to be that easy. Enter Lots-O'-Huggin' Bear, perfectly voiced by Ned Beatty. The big purple teddy bear welcomes them to their new homes with all the patriarchal southern charm you've seen in other roles Beatty has played. And you know what that means…something evil is up and about, as neither Lotso, as he's called, nor his clothes horse empty-headed henchman Ken (voice of Michael Keaton) are what they seem.

The movie then has an element of being almost a horror story (the Mongo-esque droopy eyed baby doll enforcer, as well as a perfectly creepy "monkey with cymbals" running the video control room are more likely to give adults nightmares than kids, however), then it seamlessly morphs into a prison escape movie (including the music 'borrowed' from "The Great Escape"), and then a surprisingly intense thriller (don't lie to me after you see the movie and tell me that you weren't gripping the chair during a couple of the last scenes…I'll know better).

But let's not forget the most important parts; the humor and the camaraderie. Although I don't think there was anyone under 14 when I saw it at a Monday matinee, this is still a kid's movie, and of course they will absolutely love it. You can take any six year old in to see this, and I can pretty much guarantee you that no matter how much ADHD they have, they will keep their eyes glued to the screen the entire time.

So will the adults; for as usual, there are jokes that are for grown-ups as well. Not "adult" jokes in terms of sexual double-entendres or bodily function comments, but hilarious little moments that will find the parents laughing louder than the kids…especially all of the bits between Barbie and Ken. Not to mention the scene where Buzz gets put into Spanish mode.

Most movies that get to a second sequel (that aren't planned trilogies or series such as Harry Potter) are just doing so to milk out more money. The Shrek and Ice Age films immediately come to mind. That is not the case with "Toy Story 3", as it might even be viewed by some

people as the best of the three. There is so much heart to this film; so much emotion shown onscreen. It is an amazingly intelligent script, and the actors do such a great job bringing it to life. Tom Hanks and Tim Allen of course deserve the most credit, but they wouldn't be anything without the supporting cast of Joan Cusack as Jesse, Don Rickles and Estelle Harris as Mr. & Mrs. Potato Head, Wallace Shawn as Rex, John Ratzenberger as Ham, and Blake Clark stepping into the Slinky Dog shoes of the late Jim Varney.

It is a magical movie that succeeds mostly in not trying too hard to succeed. It doesn't try for the same gravitas as we saw in "Wall-E" and "Up", but it still has a unique poignancy all on its own without any sense of maudlin.

We grow up, we move on to new adventures…but we don't forget where we came from and what we had. That is all spelled out so wonderfully in the last scene. And while I think you would be fine watching this movie in 2D, the 3D version does offer one big advantage…no one will be able to see the little bit of mist in your eyes when you're wearing those stupid glasses.

It is another classic. A movie that will be watched and re-watched for the next 50 years.

My Rating: Bernie Kosar (4 footballs)