

## **A Garfield fan reviews The Garfield Movie**

For as long as I can remember, I have been a very huge fan of Garfield. My parents owned a couple of the reprint books when I was a kid, and I loved to read and re-read them over and over again. I watched the Garfield and Friends TV show whenever I could, and I also got a lot of the Garfield books put out alongside the comics, like the Pet Force series. I probably got on the nerves of my parents and a lot of my friends just talking about Garfield constantly. And I loved his cartoons so much that he was one of my biggest inspirations to become a cartoon artist myself. If it weren't for Garfield, I probably would have never set foot into art school, and you probably would have never seen me here on Deviant Art (or Furaffinity, or whichever website you're reading this from).

So you could imagine when around 2002 or 2003 how excited I was when the Garfield website announced a movie adaptation. Around this time the comic was turning 25 years old, and the movie seemed like it would be a landmark commemoration. I remember checking the site constantly to get updates on who was being cast, which characters from the comic were appearing, and new characters created specifically for the movie. I didn't like that the movie was going to be live action with a CGI Garfield rather than completely animated, but that wouldn't mean the movie would be bad, would it?

When I started seeing the first trailers for the movie, I didn't know what to think of them. It had CGI Garfield dancing to Bob Segar's "Old Time Rock N'Roll," and the CGI Garfield was kind of off putting. Animation and effects-wise it was all right at least by the standards of effects in 2004. But trying to make a realistic looking Garfield that still had traits of the cartoon character like the head shape and the big eyes was just unappealing. Despite the trailer leaving me indifferent for the movie, I still tried to cling to some anticipation for it's release. The movie came out June 11 2004, mere days before the strip turned 26 years old. My family and I saw the movie a few days after it came out, and since at the time I had just finished my Freshmen year of high school, seeing this movie was going to be like an end of the school year congratulations present This was it. It's finally here. This was going to be Jim Davis' gift to his fans, to thank all of us for sticking with him so long.

And then I actually saw it. I don't think I laughed once at any of the jokes. Maybe I smiled a few times here and there, but it's hard to remember. And after it was done, I was just left feeling numb. What happened? Where did all the fun of the comic and the TV show go? Garfield is the most syndicated comic strip in the world, and is a long-runner in newspapers. It had a successful TV show, many specials, and merchandise up the wazoo. For this movie to be the milestone celebration of everything Garfield had achieved up to this point was like getting sick on your birthday. I didn't like or hate this movie. It just left me hollow. Years later in college when I'd say that I was a Garfield fan, once or twice I got asked what I thought of the movie and I'd answer along the lines of "Oh, I only pay attention to the Garfield of the comics and the TV show. CGI Garfield is a false Garfield." The answer was tongue in cheek, but upon reflection it makes me realize what it was about this movie that bothered me so much. This movie's worst sin was that I couldn't walk away from it and say that I was proud to be a Garfield fan.

How did we end up with such a mess of a movie? Unfortunately, there isn't a lot of behind the scenes information online, other than a few making-of videos showing how CGI Garfield is made and how the actors had to interact with a character that wasn't really there. So I can't really determine who exactly dropped the ball. What I have found though, is that the Garfield movie was a dream project that Jim Davis had perused for years, but kept getting shot down. In the 80s Garfield had become popular enough in newspapers to merit TV specials starting in 1980 and then the TV show *Garfield and Friends* in 1988. Around this time, Davis thought that Garfield would be ready for an animated feature. The same year Garfield and Friends started to air, a 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary special for Garfield aired on TV and towards the end, Davis teased that an animated Garfield movie entitled *Garfield's Judgment Day* was in production, and included footage of Desirée Goyette and Lou Rawls recording a song for it. But the movie never came to be, and as far as I know Davis has not given an explanation as to why. Thankfully animation producer and writer John Cawley, who worked as an associative producer on *Garfield and Friends* and several of the Garfield TV specials, shed some light on what happened. Believe it or not, Jim Davis couldn't persuade any studios to produce *Garfield's Judgment Day* because they thought his script was too dark. He then attempted to have CBS turn it into a TV special, but they were disinterested as well. So finally he had it published as a Garfield storybook in 1990. I actually read the Garfield's Judgment Day book as a kid once, and looking back on it I can understand

why people would be turned off by it as a movie. Not only was the story much darker than normal for Garfield (setting aside the infamous 1989 Garfield Halloween strips of course), it was really weird also. In Garfield's Judgment Day, all the animals suddenly start talking (NOT "talking" in thought bubbles like in the comic, I mean actually speaking aloud) in order to warn their owners of an impending storm. I would have been very surprised as a kid to learn that this now obscure book was meant to be a big-screen feature.

Davis refused to give up on the idea of a Garfield movie. In the mid 90s wrote two more scripts that would have focused more on comedy, but by that time the Garfield and Friends show and the TV specials were wrapping up, and there would be no interest to do more animated Garfield. But then a line of live action movie adaptations of cartoons such as the Flintstones, Rocky and Bullwinkle, and Scooby-Doo being successful apparently inspired Davis to do a live action adaptation of Garfield. 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox agreed to be the distributor, with Peter Hewitt as director and Alec Sokolow and Joel Cohen (both were co-writers on Toy Story) doing the screenplay. At last Davis' labor of love was finally made.

Now this is the part where I rip it all to shreds.

The movie opens with the camera panning over photos of Jon and Garfield together, including one where Jon picks Garfield up from a box of free kittens. Already hardcore Garfield fans are going to complain about how this contradicts the comic and TV specials where Garfield was born in an Italian restaurant and then given away to a pet store before Jon bought him, but I'm going to do my best not to turn this review into a nitpicking guide pointing out every difference between the movie and the comic unless it's something really egregious. We then see Garfield wake up his owner Jon (Breckin Meyer) by cannonballing onto him. Jon then takes a shower, and Garfield flushes the toilet to interfere with the warm water and make Jon finish his shower faster so he can prepare breakfast sooner. Jon feeds Garfield some funky tasting liver flavored cat food while he prepares his own breakfast, but then while he has his back turned, Garfield swaps their food and Jon ends up eating the nasty cat food instead. Jon complains "ack, it's liver!" while Garfield remarks "actually it's liver flavored." Umm, how is reminding the audience that the yucky cat food is liver flavored supposed to be a joke? I'm reminded of an article I read by the Comic Strip Doctor years ago about one

way jokes in Garfield could be improved is to have Garfield speak less and not have him spell out jokes for the audience (this article is probably what inspired “Garfield minus Garfield” later down the line), and this is one good instance in this movie that could have been put to practice. But if I count every failed joke in this movie we’ll probably be here all day.

I should probably also mention that Garfield is voiced by Bill Murray, which lead to a lot of people to wonder how the film makers persuaded him to do this movie. There is a fan theory that Murray did the part as a debt to Garfield’s voice actor Lorenzo Music after he died in 2001, because Music did the voice of Peter Venkman on the Real Ghostbusters cartoon, who was originally played by Murray in the live action Ghostbusters movies. Sadly, the truth is that this is just a coincidence. In an interview with GQ magazine, Murray said he did Garfield because he thought voice acting would be a nice change of pace from acting on camera. He got really excited for the role when he thought he read that Joel Coen of Coen brothers fame was one of the screenwriters... unaware that it was really Joel **Cohen**, a different person with a similar name. I’m now curious how often actors agree to do terrible movies because they mistook the director or writer for someone else they admired.

Back to the film. Garfield goes outside and meets Nermal, who is portrayed as a Siamese cat rather than being a little grey kitten. Unlike in the comic, Nermal never boasts about being the world’s cutest kitten. The only similarity between this Nermal and the one in the comic is that they both annoy Garfield, which is close enough I guess. The milkman is visiting houses, making me wonder do milkmen still even exist these days? Garfield and Nermal plan to steal some milk, but first Garfield says he wants to play “astronaut” with Nermal. Basically Garfield traps Nermal in a bucket that gets lifted into the air while Garfield takes the milk for himself, and even exclaims “got milk?” (Do I need to review my part about not spelling out jokes again?) Garfield leaves Nermal stuck in the bucket, and then goes in front of a house with a chained dog named Luca and teases him, while Luca tries to chase Garfield but is restrained by the chain. Will these side characters that the movie has just introduced become important to the plot? Let’s wait and see.

We then get a product placement scene with Jon at an Apple computer. And then he spots a mouse and tells Garfield to catch it. But if you’ve read the

comic, you'll know Garfield has no interest in catching mice. The mouse, who is named Louis, gets out of the house and then Garfield meets up with him and warns him not to appear in the house when Jon is around. Will this new character be important to the movie too?

We then see Garfield watching TV, and there's a pet show with a host named Happy Chapman (Stephen Tobolowsky) advertising cat food. With a name like that, he certainly can't be a villain! Happy shows off the cat mascot that's on the food named Persnikitty, and Garfield remarks how he wouldn't want to be like Persnikitty appearing on TV, newspapers and t-shirts everywhere, and then smiles at the audience. Ok, I will admit that was kind of funny. Jon comes home with some packets of lasagna, and tells Garfield not to eat them. But then he goes away and leaves them on the counter where Garfield can easily get them. I know that Jon in the comic can be incompetent, but even by those standards this is a stupid move on his part.

We then cut to Happy Chapman in his studio and when the camera is turned off, he starts sneezing. He's actually allergic to cats, and he demands Benadryl to treat himself. To establish that Chapman is EVIL, he uses the word "damn," probably so the movie can avoid the dreaded G-rating (TV Tropes reference FTW). And in the background of this shot is a huge circular sign for Mello lemon-lime drinks. So we get two product placements for the price of one! Chapman goes to his office, and is completely chewing the scenery with his assistant. Chapman is also wearing a completely yellow suit, so apparently he shares the same wardrobe with April O'Neil. Chapman then sees his brother Walter on TV, reporting the news, and expresses jealousy at how his show is fledgling while Walter is successful as a newscaster. This scene was just weird to me. Is newscaster really that prestigious a job? I don't look at the local news people on my TV as celebrities. If it were established that Walter Chapman was someone famous on the level of Walter Kronkite, it would be a lot more understandable to me how jealous Happy Chapman really is. But the movie doesn't really establish that. Oh well, I'm thinking too hard about a movie that's supposed to be for kids.

We then cut back to Garfield's house, and Jon has come home sees that Garfield has eaten all his packs of lasagna. What did you expect would happen? You practically left a monkey alone with dynamite and matches. Jon then decides to take Garfield out someplace, but doesn't say where.

Garfield then asks if they're going to Chuck E. Cheese. And as they're going out to the car, Garfield keeps throwing out guesses like Wendys and Olive Garden. Hmm, I'm starting to notice something I never paid attention to before in this film, and that's how many product placements there are. I'm now beginning the Product Placement Counter to keep track of each instance the movie either shows a company name or namedrops one in dialogue, and so far I've counted 7. (since the "got milk" line is an ad slogan, I'm including that as well) How much higher will it go?

Jon then visits Garfield's vet, Dr. Liz Wilson (Jennifer Love Hewitt) and Jon is all puppy love over her. Unlike in the comic, Jon and Liz actually like each other, and here's a difference between the comic and movie I actually will complain about. What makes Jon and Liz's relationship funny in the comic is the love-hate relationship between the two of them, and how Jon has a hard time being romantic and gets rejected constantly. Some very hilarious comic strips came out of Jon having disastrous dates with either Liz or other women, such as one time he dated a woman that was raised by wolves. To not take advantage of this potential source of comedy is quite a failure for this movie, and I don't know why this change was made. Jon and Liz liking each other in this movie and the sequel seems to have affected the comic as well, since in 2006 Davis finally had them become a couple. It also doesn't help that Meyer and Hewitt don't really do outstanding jobs with their roles, although I blame that more on the writing not keeping the zaniness of the comic rather than on the actors.

Ok, enough divergence, now back to the movie. Garfield is taken to get pampered and groomed, and while he's away, Liz gives Jon a dog that needs to be adopted named Odie. And to be honest, the dogs that play Odie (I think the behind the scenes mentioned that two dogs were used to play him) look very adorable. And once again, Garfield comic purists cry foul at this scene, since in the comic Odie originally belonged to a room mate of Jon's named Lyman. This change doesn't really bother me though because I tried to think of the most memorable or funny strips Lyman was in and couldn't come up with any. He only really existed to be someone for Jon to interact with other than Garfield, so I can see why Davis just stopped having him appear in the comic and didn't bother to have him appear in the movie either. This isn't even the first time Lyman was retconned out of Garfield and Odie's first meeting, since the Garfield's 9 Lives TV special omitted him as well. I guess it would have been nice if a little nod to Lyman was put in the movie, such

as in the opening with all of Jon's photos being shown there was one of him with a mustached friend that Garfield fans would immediately guess is Lyman, or Liz had a line saying Odie was given up for adoption by someone named Lyman, but oh well.

After Garfield gets groomed, he teases a bunch of pets that are in cages. Wow, what an asshole. He then leaves the grooming area, and none of the veterinary employees care to notice that one of the pets they just groomed is running around the place by itself. We cut to outside the vet clinic and Jon has already put Odie in the car and talking to Liz about how anxious he is to take care of a dog. Wait, Jon is getting ready to leave and neglected to pick Garfield up too? Well just in the nick of time, Garfield exits the vet clinic and is shocked to see Odie in the car. Once Jon takes Odie home, Garfield is instantly jealous of him. As Jon drives home, we see clearly that his car is a Volvo. And as he's going in, he carries two PetCo bags (those two product placements raise the counter to 9). Jon love bombs Odie at home, showing Odie around the house, and Garfield just gets more jealous. When Garfield tries to watch TV, Odie takes Garfield's spot on the couch (having owned a few dogs at home, I can attest this type of behavior does occur with pets, so this scene actually does amuse me a bit).

Garfield then takes Odie outside and tries to play the "astronaut" trick on him. But Odie isn't as stupid as he looks, and tricks Garfield into getting into the bucket himself and launches Garfield into the air. Surprisingly when Garfield lands back on the ground, he doesn't quip "cats always land on their feet!" That seemed like an obvious lame joke to make and the writers decided to pass it up, so good for them. Garfield chases Odie, and then Odie runs into Luca's yard, and Garfield thinks he has nothing to fear... until he sees that Luca's chain is broken. Luca is about to chew up Garfield, but then Odie gets in Luca's way and starts licking his neck repeatedly. For some reason this bothers Luca so much that he doesn't attack Garfield. Luca is practically 2 or 3 times bigger than Odie, so I wonder why he doesn't just shove him aside. Garfield is still being a sourpuss until Nermal and Arlene appear and tell Garfield that if it wasn't for Odie, Luca would be killing him right now. Arlene is portrayed as a grey cat rather than a pink one like in the comic, so changing her fur color is understandable, although making Arlene grey makes her look more like how Nermal does in the comic! Also, even though Garfield and Arlene are a couple in the comic, there's no romance between them in this movie. In the director commentary, Peter Hewitt

mentions that an early version of the script was going to have Garfield and Arlene act more romantically towards each other, but ended up getting cut. By not retaining the love-hate dynamic Garfield and Arlene have in the comic, the movie once again fails to seize upon a source of comedy that made the comic fun to read. Arlene and Nermal in this movie are really just the characters in name only, and the only role they serve in the movie is act as Garfield's conscience and to please Garfield fans in the weakest possible way to include some of the side characters from the comic. Oh, and also to aid in merchandising by allowing a wider variety of Beanie Babies of the characters to be sold. (I actually own a Beanie Baby of movie Nermal)

The next morning we see Odie bring in the newspaper for Jon, while Garfield watches and calls him a suck up. Is it just me, or has Garfield been nothing but a jerk through out this film? In the comic and the TV show there were times he could be mean or mischievous, but there were still moments he showed some heart, such as sharing his candy with Odie at the end of the Halloween special and saying in the Christmas special that the most important thing about Christmas was the loving rather than the presents. This version of Garfield has just been an asshole all through out. We then see Garfield on the couch watching a music video and bobbing up and down to the music, and then Odie jumps on the couch and tries to push Garfield off. After fighting over the chair for a while, Odie and Garfield then start having a dance off. To the movie's credit, I do like that they retained the friendly antagonism and physical comedy between Garfield and Odie. I've just realized too that if you look carefully at Odie in the scenes where he "dances," the dog actor is clearly looking up at something above them that's either out of frame in close ups or digitally edited out in wide shots. They take their dance outside and Nermal and Arlene just so happen to be watching and are surprised to see the two of them acting friendly. Garfield is immediately embarrassed and pushes Odie aside.

Jon then has a date with Liz and takes Odie with him. And Liz drives a Frontier pickup truck (product placement count: 10). I don't know about you, but I never really imagined Liz being the kind of person that drives a pickup. Garfield is jealous again that Jon is taking Odie with him on a date while leaving him behind, and chases the pickup and gets into the back. The truck stops at an intersection at one point, causing Garfield to slam into the back of the window, looking reminiscent of the Garfield stuck up doll. Since this mythology gag is meant to allude to a once-famous Garfield product

that's been a dead fad for years, I'll pass on increasing the PPC. Jon, Liz, and Odie arrive at an outdoor dog show, and Garfield wanders around the place. He passes through a curtain that's behind the registration table, and then runs into a crowd of dogs at the dog show. Now the smart thing for Garfield to do in this scene would be to just immediately turn around back into the curtain and flee. But since the movie requires the characters to act stupid at this moment, Garfield instead runs straight ahead into the dog show and hides under a mat in the middle while all the dogs swarm him. We see Jon react to all the dogs going crazy (apparently he missed seeing Garfield somehow), and there's a huge PetCo sign behind him. Should I increase the product placement counter if the same product is shown twice? Oh what the hell. PPC is now at 11. The dog show people start playing music to hold everybody over until the show gets back under control, but hearing the music Odie gets in front of the crowd and starts dancing in front of everyone.

Meanwhile, Garfield escapes the mat and is chased by all the dog show dogs, we see even more PetCo signs. They're in quick succession so I'll increase the PPC to 12 to cover all their appearances rather than adding up each individual shot they appear in. We then cut back to Odie getting tons of applause from the audience, and Happy Chapman (boy I nearly forgot that he's in this movie) just so happens to be one of the judges seeing Odie's performance. Chapman gives Odie a ribbon and offers Jon to put Odie on TV, but Jon refuses. A picture for the newspaper is taken of them, and Happy clearly looks unhappy in the photo at how Jon turned him down.

Liz takes Jon back home, and Garfield rides with them this time by hanging onto the bottom of the truck (apparently all this time, Jon never noticed Garfield snuck with them). Garfield goes back into the house, and is furiously jealous at how Odie got so much attention. Garfield smacks a ball, which then hits a lamp, and then hits a bunch of other stuff that causes a chain reaction to wreck the entire living room. And then when Jon comes in, Breckin Meyer gives Jon a WTF reaction face that should be worthy of a meme image. Jon then puts Garfield outside for the night, and then for some reason Garfield starts singing a "woe is me" award bait song, while Odie gets a bath and then watches Jon play with a model train set. And if you look carefully, there's another moment the movie forces the characters to act stupid, because Jon forgets to put Odie's collar back on after his bath. And then there is a touching moment in which after Jon starts to go to sleep, Odie

goes outside to be with Garfield... only for Garfield to totally snub him and goes back through the pet door, locking Odie out. Someone please explain to me why the title character is supposed to be likeable.

Arlene and Nermal just so happen to have been watching how Odie was locked outside, and Arlene remarks that dogs tend to run away when they're left out. Umm, that isn't always so. On occasion our own dogs will get out of the house, but usually they'll come back to the front door when they want in and bark to let us know they're outside. And guess what? Happy Chapman just so happens to pass by on a motor scooter, and Odie for some reason chases after him. Odie gets lost in town and is then picked up by an old lady, and since Odie has no collar the lady doesn't know who he belongs to.

We then cut to the next day and Happy Chapman is in a clothes store getting measurements done on him, and he thinks having a dog like Odie will rocket him to success. You have to wonder if Happy wants a dog on his show so badly, why not just get one? There's never a scene where a studio executive requires Happy to only work with cats. I just typed "trained dogs for sale" on Google and found many places near me selling trained dogs, so coming across them shouldn't be too difficult. Happy's assistant then notices a "lost dog" sign for Odie was put up on a street post, and the soundtrack turns very sour as Happy and his assistant glare at it. We then see Jon going around town placing missing signs for Odie everywhere. And once again the movie forces the characters to act stupid because Jon puts a missing sign for Odie on a tree, unaware that the other side of the tree has a found sign put up for Odie put up by the old lady. I also have to comment on how Meyer's acting is pretty boring through this sequence. He acts like Odie's disappearance is just a minor inconvenience. I recall one time my sister's dog Sulley got out of the house for an hour, and when my sister realized he was gone, she went into full panic mode until we found him. I don't expect the movie to have Jon go totally over the top, but at least have him show a little more emotion over losing Odie. Although again, I don't think this is Meyer's fault. I suspect he realized the script was shit and just phoned his performance in so he could get his paycheck. Jon goes back home and makes phone calls about how Odie is lost, and we see that his living room is completely tidy again. Gee, how long did it take him to clean up the mess Garfield made? Liz comes to visit Jon, and before Jon can admit that he lost Odie, Liz confesses her love for him. Jon then tells Liz Odie is lost, and Liz doesn't show much

emotion at Odie being lost either. I guess Hewitt thought the script was shit also and phoned her performance in as well. I can't help but think how much better this movie could have been if it kept the love-hate dynamic between Jon and Liz in the comic, like maybe Jon has a crush on Liz but Liz keeps turning him down, but then after she sees Jon heartbroken after losing Odie they start to connect with each other. A pretty ordinary falling in love story, but simple re-writes like these would have made the characters a little bit more interesting and make the audience want to care more. It just makes me sad that not even the bare minimum of an effort was made.

Unfortunately for Jon and Liz, Happy Chapman and his assistant started looking for Odie first and visit the old lady before they do. He lies to the lady about being Odie's owner and takes him away. Meanwhile Garfield is watching TV, and it's nothing but dogs on TV, including Lassie, Santa's Little Helper from the Simpsons, a dog in a Wal Mart commercial, and Old Yeller. Incidentally, there's a Garfield comic in which Garfield says Old Yeller is his favorite movie because he likes movies with happy endings. Apparently the people who rejected Garfield's Judgment Day for being too dark were unaware that Davis actually did occasionally wrote comics with pretty edgy subject matter. Oh and since Wal Mart appeared in this movie, that raises the PPC up to 13. I'll add an extra one also for the appearance of Santa's Little Helper, since 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox owns the Simpsons.

Garfield then goes outside, and Arlene and Nermal berate him for how he treated Odie. Oh and they're with Luca now on a new chain, and he's not interested in trying to kill any one of the three cats now in front of him. What happened that changed his character? Garfield then goes back inside and sees Odie dancing on Happy Chapman's show, along with another shot of the Mello logo, and Happy states he and Odie are going to New York soon. Jon is on the phone taking calls about any leads there may be on finding Odie, and his Apple computer is prominently in the middle of the frame. Garfield tries to tell Jon that Odie is on TV, but the TV cuts to a Wendy's commercial. The PPC is now at 18 for these three product placements in quick succession.

We then see Happy Chapman back in his office, taking a shock collar out of a silver box with a danger voltage symbol on it. The writers have decided that having Happy lie to an old lady and steal a dog isn't villainous enough, so they have to turn him into an animal abuser also. He puts it on Odie, and

Happy's assistant objects and reminds that he promised never to use it, but Happy dismisses him. This of course begs the question why does the studio even have this collar lying around if they were just going to make him promise to never use it in the first place? Whatever this shock collar does that's so horrible is kept under wraps until later in the movie.

Back at Jon's home, Garfield decides to take matters into his own hands to rescue Odie from Chapman himself. Garfield pulls out a box of cat food that for some reason has a map of the city on the back of it with Chapman's TV station on it (he also mentions that there are Apple Jacks, Frosted Flakes, and Coco Puffs besides this box of cat food, so these three cereals make the PPC go up to 21). Garfield then tries to go out to Chapman's studio in the city... only to get tired when he's still in front of his house and goes back in to watch the Best Damn Sports Show Period on TV while eating Goldfish crackers, so those two increase the PPC to 23. Oh and the word "damn" is obscured on the TV, despite the fact that Happy Chapman used the word damn earlier in the movie. Also, since this is the second time 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox has put one of their own shows in this movie, I'll now start a separate counter for how many times Fox promotes themselves.

So finally Garfield leaves the house in search of Odie and hitches a ride on a Greyhound bus to get into the city faster. Did the film makers get so desperate to have as many companies sign on as possible that they're shilling public transit as well? PPC is up to 24 now. When he arrives in the city, he goes into an alley and then suddenly a swarm of rats surround him, remarking that they're going to have fresh meat. So since when do rats eat cats? But then Louis the mouse just so happens to return and tells the rats that Garfield is with him, so they all disperse for some reason. Since when was Louis a friend with all these rats? Oh, and one of the rats remarks that they should eat leftovers in a Red Lobster alley instead, raising the PPC to 25. Seeing that there's so much product placement in this movie, I have to wonder what the screenplay writing sessions were like. Did the writers put all these product placements in themselves? Or did all the companies sign onto the movie beforehand and the studio gave the writers a quota of how many they had to namedrop in the script?

Louis then helps guide Garfield to Happy's TV studio, but they do so disguising themselves in boxes. Louis wears a Chinese food box over him while Garfield wears a mail box over him. I'm surprised Garfield isn't

wearing a box for a company or restaurant for another product placement moment. And I can't see what brand the Chinese food box is, so there won't be an increase to the PPC this time. Garfield and Louis finally arrive at the studio building, and Garfield infiltrates the building through the vent system. But Garfield is detected by security (they only see him as a blockage though) and turn on the air, throwing Garfield through all the pipes around the building. Meanwhile, Jon has realized that Garfield has gone missing too and calls Liz to help him search. Jon and Liz finally come across the old lady's found sign for Odie and go to her house. The old lady tells them that Happy took Odie, and then Jon wonders whether Happy took Garfield as well. Considering that Chapman only expressed interest in Odie and never even saw Garfield at the dog show earlier, why would Jon think that Chapman might have come back to his house to take Garfield also? Just to get revenge on Jon for turning him down or something? For all he knows, Garfield may have just ran away or something. Whatever. This is just a children's movie. Stop thinking hard about it.

Garfield finally makes his way to Odie, who is locked in a cage with the shock collar (I have to wonder how long Garfield had to wander through the vents before he found Odie's room by chance). But before Garfield can free Odie, Happy returns and finally tests the shock collar out. Are you ready to find out why this collar is so horrible? Like are the shocks so strong that it causes Odie excruciating agony? It turns out all it does is it gives Odie a jolt that forces him to jump and do a backflip. That's still pretty mean, but the movie kind of misses a moment to give more pathos for Odie by showing him really scared of the collar or something like that. Instead of actually having the movie SHOW us the character's feelings, they just have Garfield remark that the shock collar is inhumane, as if the audience is too stupid to recognize animal abuse unless it's pointed out. Incidentally, Peter Hewitt mentions on the DVD commentary that originally Odie would do two back flips in mid-air, but it was changed to just one because the film makers were afraid a double back flip would be too scary for kids. So the watering down of how horrible this shock collar is was actually probably intentional and not just due to bad writing. Happy takes Odie away into an elevator, with mock spy music playing in the soundtrack as Garfield plots to save his friend. Garfield steals a food tray and rail grinds his way down the staircase. So when the plot demands it, this lazy cat can become Sonic the Hedgehog on a whim. But Garfield isn't careful where he slides and goes out of a window, falls many stories and lands in a truck full of lasagna. Pasta Pomodoro brand

lasagna to be exact, increasing the PPC to 26. Remember kids, not only is Pomodoro lasagna tasty, it can cushion a fall as well!

Garfield gets out of the lasagna truck but before he can chase Happy getting into a taxi, an animal catcher captures him and throws him in the pound. And then he starts singing again for some reason. And by strange coincidence, Happy Chapman's old cat Persnikitty is here as well, and he's pissed off at how Happy abandoned him after he got a hold of Odie. Wait, that cat which appeared only very briefly with Chapman is suddenly a character now? Garfield explains out loud to all the pets that he's trying to get to the train station and save his friend Odie, and gives a short speech about how Odie is his friend. All the dogs in the pound listen to Garfield are very surprised to hear that a cat is trying to rescue a dog. The pound keepers then have a little girl come in to choose a cat to adopt, taking Garfield and Persnikitty out of their cages. Once out of his cage, Persnikitty presses a button that opens all the cages to overwhelm the pound keepers and allow Garfield and all the other animals to escape. I have to wonder, what idiot would build a button in a pound that opens all cages at once? And what happens to all the cats and dogs after they run away? Wouldn't they be in a lot of danger running through the city with cars everywhere? Holy shit. I now realize that this movie may have accidentally pulled what TV Tropes calls an "inferred holocaust," in which what seems like a happy outcome (the animals escape the pound) would in reality lead to something tragic (some of them become road kill while wandering the city). And I thought Garfield's Judgment Day was supposed to be dark!

We cut to see Jon and Liz arriving at Happy Chapman's studio and find out that Chapman isn't there. A security guard informs them that Chapman is already at the train station getting ready to leave to New York, so Jon and Liz head there. At the station we see that Chapman uses Amtrak, so the PPC is now at 27. Oh, and when Chapman is offered steak or lasagna for dinner on the train, he chooses steak and says he hates lasagna, as if the audience is supposed to think that the villain hating the main character's favorite food is funny. Garfield sees that the train Odie is on is already leaving, and then he has an idea. Since we saw Jon playing with a model trains earlier, Garfield realizes that the train station is just like Jon's toy trains, only bigger. So he sneaks into the train control room, and starts messing with the controls, looking for the one train headed to New York. He screws up the controls so much that he sets all the trains on collision course until he presses the

emergency stop.

Garfield gets into the stopped train and frees Odie. And suddenly Odie isn't wearing the shock collar anymore. Did Happy take it back with him after testing it? As they leave the train, Happy spots Garfield and Odie leavening, so he gets off his train and chases them through the station. Garfield and Odie then head into the suitcase storage room... umm, why? That's not where the exit is. Oh wait, the reason why is so Happy can run into them as if he was precognitive of where they are and have a final showdown chase scene. Garfield and Odie turn around to run away, but Happy pushes some suitcases over, and somehow he predicted that it would cause a domino effect that would eventually knock a suitcase in Garfield and Odie's way. Instead of just jumping or climbing over the suitcase (it's just barely taller than Garfield and Odie) they both of them stop like they're trapped while Happy grabs Odie. Garfield leaps up and tries to attack Happy (for some reason, he isn't sneezing as Garfield touches him) and tosses Garfield away. Suddenly, the cavalry comes to save the day, as Persnikitty and the other animals Garfield freed have come to help stop Happy. So there was no inferred holocaust after all. Even the rats come to help save the day, even though just earlier they were trying to kill Garfield and couldn't have known he'd be here in the station. The animals all surround Chapman and start attacking him, but since the movie makers already met their quota for a PG rating by having Chapman say "damn" once in the beginning, all animal on human violence takes place off screen with just the shadowy silhouettes of all the animals getting on top of Chapman being seen.

The animals all leave, and Chapman now has the shock collar around his neck. Odie hands Garfield the remote to the collar, and then Garfield shocks Chapman to incapacitate him. Garfield then gives Chapman a speech about how Odie is his friend, and then Odie shocks Chapman a second time and forces him to do a flip. Garfield then congratulates Odie on the way he shocked Chapman, because watching people get shocked is comedic gold! Just ask the people that run Abu Ghraib prison. Jon and Liz then enter the area looking for Garfield and Odie, Happy Chapman gets up and for no reason does his "be happy sign" in front of Jon. Jon tells Chapman "this is for stealing my dog and my cat!" and then PUNCHES CHAPMAN IN THE FACE. Holy shit! Jon sure took a level in badass. Jon says he's glad to have stopped Chapman from kidnapping both Garfield and Odie, to which Garfield corrects him, "he didn't steal me, I was a rescue worker!" So even

Garfield realizes it's boneheaded for Jon to assume Chapman stole him too. We cut back to Nermal and Arlene watching TV in their house, and they see Walter Chapman reporting on Happy getting arrested, saying that Happy is his "idiot brother." They then see Liz and Jon carrying Odie and Garfield out of the station, and are happy to see that Garfield is a hero. Yay! Their characters barely contributed to the movie. The movie ends with Jon sharing flavor blasted goldfish crackers with Liz (final PPC is 28, two of those times being Fox promoting itself), and then Garfield says some schmaltzy stuff on how they're all one big family, blah blah blah, the end. No wait, It's not over. The movie continues to torment us with Garfield singing and dancing to "I feel good." Because Shrek made ending family movies with a song and dance number popular, other filmmakers must do the same. And then the glorious credits run, ending my torture.

What more is there to say about the Garfield movie? The performances are all pretty much one note, with only Murray and Tobolowsky being the ones that really show any passion. It missed out on a lot of the character dynamics that were in the comic, save for some things like Garfield and Odie's rivalry, and almost all of the zaniness and fun of the comics and the TV show was neutered. Heck, Breckin Meyer previously had a role in the movie Rat Race before he appeared in Garfield, and that film felt a lot more like a cartoon than the Garfield movie did. And I'm still puzzled as to why this movie wasn't completely animated. (as a side note, Peter Hewitt says in the commentary that he enjoyed the challenge of integrating CGI Garfield into live action so much that he might do the sequel completely CGI. A fully animated Garfield movie finally realized until the direct to DVD movie Garfield Gets Real)

So what will ultimately be this film's legacy? On one hand, although the film was critically panned, it made enough money in the box office to indicate that people were interested in Garfield again, and allowed Davis to expand and do more things with the character. A month after the movie was released, the Garfield and Friends TV show and the TV specials (minus the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary special) started getting released onto DVD. A movie sequel, "Garfield: A Tail of Two Kitties" that was a slight improvement over the first film was released in 2006, followed by several direct to DVD movies that were done with CGI but in a more cartoony style. A new Garfield TV show done with CGI animation started airing in 2009, and a new line of Garfield comic books by Kaboom Studios started in 2012. As much as I'd hate to

admit it, all this probably would have never happened if it weren't for the movie. On the other hand, the poor quality of the movie is still an embarrassment for Garfield fans such as me, and we're lucky it didn't kill the Garfield franchise. And its moderate success at the box office guarantees that movie studios will continue to make live action/CGI adaptations of cartoons that fans didn't ask for, such as Yogi Bear, The Smurfs, The Chipmunks, and now even Chip and Dale Rescue Rangers will be added to this list soon as well.

Now you might be asking me, "Daniel, why did you think Garfield: A Tail of Two Kitties was a better movie? And what do you think of the direct to DVD movies?" I'll save my thoughts on those for future reviews. Stay tuned!

-Links-

The Garfield 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary special on You Tube (unfortunately parts 1 and 2 are gone. I've linked to part 4, where they start talking about Garfield's Judgment Day) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l5XJAV-JPTY>

John Cawley on the cancellation of Garfield's Judgment Day  
[http://www.cataroo.com/074\\_04.html](http://www.cataroo.com/074_04.html)

The Comic Strip Doctor on Garfield and "silent" Garfield  
<http://wondermark.com/the-comic-strip-doctor-garfield/>  
<http://wondermark.com/the-comic-strip-doctor-recontextualization/>

Bill Murray's GQ interview in which he says he regret doing Garfield  
<http://www.gq.com/entertainment/celebrities/201008/bill-murray-dan-fierman-gq-interview?currentPage=2>

Here are some GOOD Garfield comics to read, as an antidote to this movie and as a reminder of why the comic was so much fun to read. All these comics can be read on the Garfield website. It's a shame that the movie didn't tap into the zaniness that the comic had.

"Garfield and Jon get lost" arc (October 25-30 1982)  
<http://garfield.com/comics/vault.html?yr=1982&addr=821025>  
"Jon's disastrous vacation" arc (April 18-May 5 1984)  
<http://garfield.com/comics/vault.html?yr=1984&addr=840418>  
"Garfield meets his mother" arc (December 3-December 25 1984)  
<http://garfield.com/comics/vault.html?yr=1984&addr=841203>

“Garfield playing with his food” arc (November 11-November 16 1985)

<http://garfield.com/comics/vault.html?yr=1985&addr=851111>

The “Trapped in drapes” arc (May 12-May 24 1986)

<http://garfield.com/comics/vault.html?yr=1986&addr=860512>

The “lost in town” arc (August 25-September 28 1986)

<http://garfield.com/comics/vault.html?yr=1986&addr=860825>

“Jon dates Bertha” arc (March 16-March 28 1987)

<http://garfield.com/comics/vault.html?yr=1987&addr=870316>

“Jon’s disastrous camping trip” (August 14-September 2 1989)

<http://garfield.com/comics/vault.html?yr=1989&addr=890814>

“Garfield’s lonely Halloween” arc (October 23-28 1989)

<http://garfield.com/comics/vault.html?yr=1989&addr=891023> Yes, the infamous week of Halloween strips that confused everyone

“Jon’s most disastrous date” arc (October 7-19 1991)

<http://garfield.com/comics/vault.html?yr=1991&addr=911007>

“Jon dates Kimmy” arc (November 19-December 1 1990)

<http://garfield.com/comics/vault.html?yr=1990&addr=901119>

“Jon’s vacation to Guano-Guano” arc (March 20-April 2 1995)

<http://garfield.com/comics/vault.html?yr=1995&addr=950320>