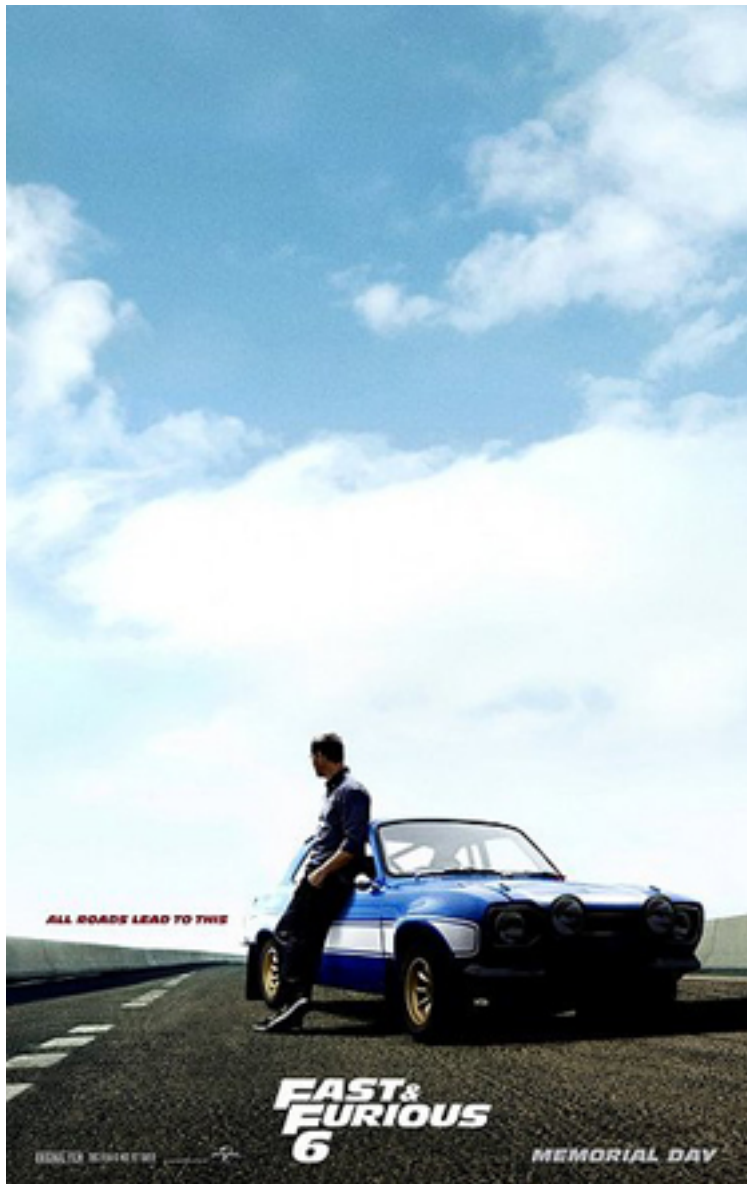


Farfetched sequel features cartoon physics and comic relief courtesy of Tyrese

Written by Kam Williams



Fast & Furious 6

It's important to note that this edition of "Fast & Furious" is every bit as funny as it is adrenaline-fueled. Most of the laughs come courtesy of comic relief provided by Tyrese, who is back in an expanded role as trash-talking Roman Pearce, a card-carrying member of the fugitive gang of auto thieves led by macho Dominic Toretto (Vin Diesel).

Like a latter-day Stepin Fetchit, Roman revives a slew of offensive African-American stereotypes, behaving in an alternately shallow, jive, flamboyant, lecherous, felonious and cowardly manner, doing everything but put on a dress to make a joke work. To Tyrese's credit, the campy performance somehow works, either because the character is so ingratiating, or because of the presence of several respectable other blacks in the principal cast.

Whether entertaining a bevy of scantily-clad beauties on his personal jet (with "It's Roman, bitches!" emblazoned on the fuselage) or making money literally rain out of an ATM to the delight of a crowd of appreciative strangers picking the bills up off the ground, the

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scene-stealing cynosure is always the center of attention. Well, except during the action, chase and fight scenes when the muscle cars and muscle heads take charge.

Other than Tyrese's, the acting is uniformly wooden and unconvincing. Not to worry, this stunt driven-spectacular is all about the eye-popping special effects, and boy does it deliver in terms of the wow factor!

The plot of F&F 6 is little more than a lame excuse to pit an army of bad guys against an army of worse guys, both as simplistically-drawn as tag teams of opposing professional wrestlers. Here's the storyline in 25 words or more. Dominic coaxes his cohorts (Tyrese, Paul Walker, Ludacris, Sung Kang and Gal Gadot) out of retirement for one last adventure, after rumors surface that his late-ex, Letty (Michelle Rodriguez), might miraculously still be alive.

They hatch a plan to rescue the damsel in distress who's suffering from amnesia and currently in the clutches of Owen Shaw (Luke Evans), a worthy adversary specializing in vehicular warfare. His posse's recent attack on a Russian military convoy explains why Diplomatic Security Service agent Hobbs (Dwayne Johnson) is desperately seeking the assistance of Dominic's crew.

They agree on the condition that, should this mission succeed, they'll be granted clemency for the host of crimes committed in F&F episodes 1-5. Hobbs okays the deal, and soon, a dogfight featuring fisticuffs, pyrotechnics and plenty of cartoon physics unfolds all over London, involving not only souped-up autos and state-of-the-art gadgetry, but a tank and a plane, to boot.

The epitome of a summer blockbuster, complete with a post-credits set-up of F&F 7 (already slated to be released in July of 2014). Just remember to check your brain at the box office, and you won't be disappointed.

Excellent (4 stars)

PG-13 for sexuality, profanity, mayhem, violence and intense action

Running time: 130 minutes

Distributor: Universal Pictures

To see a trailer for "Fast & Furious 6," visit:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_puVuHoR6o