

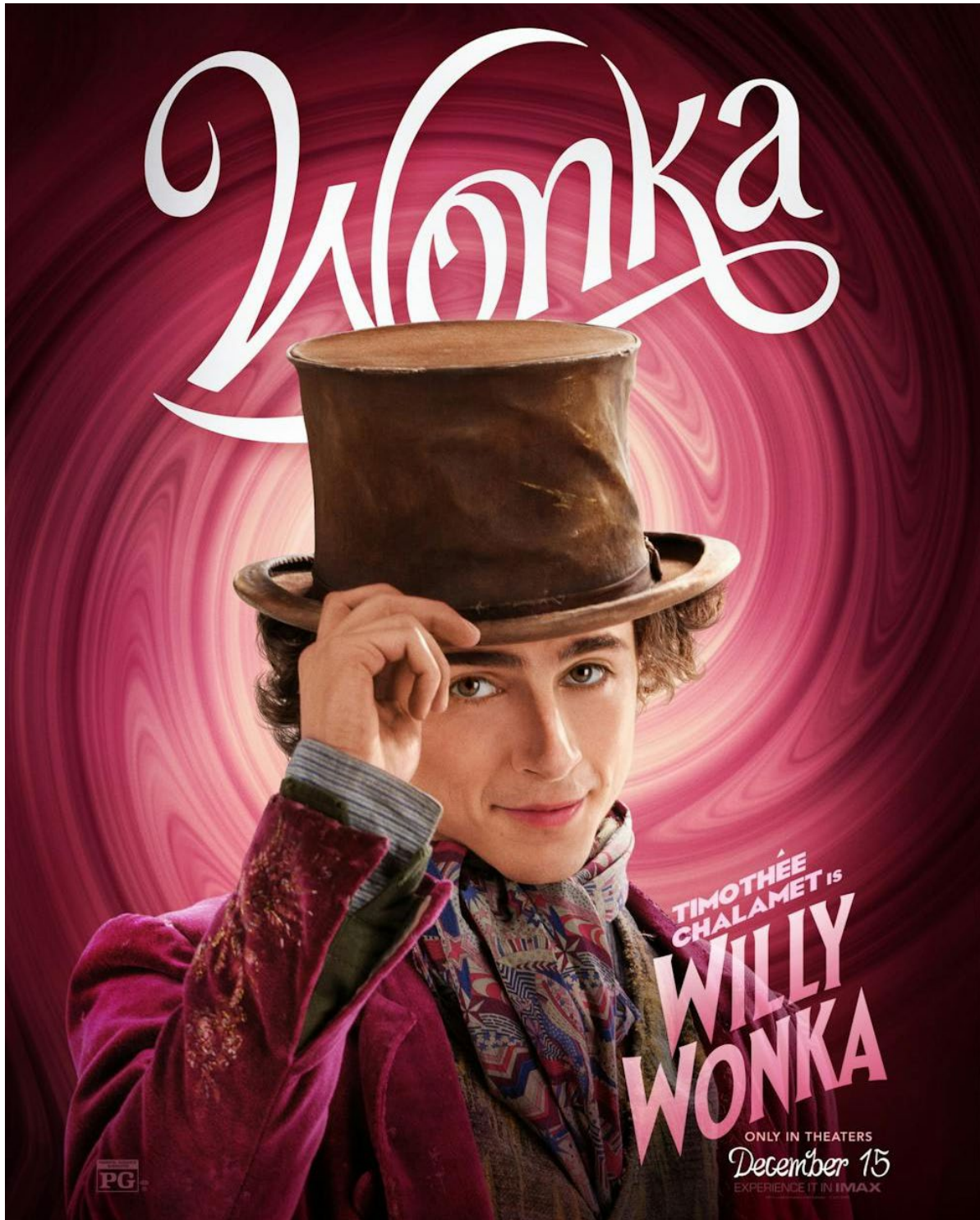


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# 'Wonka' cooks up a weirdly wondrous factory of chocolatey cringe



Taken from *RottenTomatoes*

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January 29, 2024 | 10:00am EST



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When it was first announced that [Timothée Chalamet](#) would be playing Willy Wonka in a prequel "how-he-got-his-start" film to [Charlie and the Chocolate Factory](#), I did not think it

would go well. My friends and I groaned at the thought of Timmy C. portraying a quirky chocolate maker. Those of us who were fans of Chalamet didn't want this, and those who were fans of the original movies didn't want this either. So, somebody tell me why I actually loved this movie?

The songs were fun and the vibes were cringey in the best, campiest way possible. The acting was surprisingly well done and the plot was predictable, but also wildly entertaining. Overall, *Wonka* was a super fun film; one that left me scrolling through TikTok edits of Timothée Chalamet while humming "[Pure Imagination](#)."

## Predictable Prequel

The main draw of *Wonka* is where it stems from: [Roald Dahl](#)'s classic tale of a boy named Charlie inheriting a magical chocolate factory. *Wonka* is supposed to serve as a prequel of sorts. [Paul King](#), the director of both *Wonka* and the *Paddington* films, [stated](#) that he "wants the film to grow into its own thing," but he also stressed that he did not want his version of Willy Wonka to replace the original character portrayed by [Gene Wilder](#). While the story of *Wonka* had an ending that was easy to predict within the first twenty minutes of the film, the journey from beginning to end was a ridiculously lovable experience.

The story starts with Willy Wonka traveling to the big city to start his own chocolate shop, but before he has a chance to do so, he gets tricked into indentured servitude. To top that off, his competition—the Chocolate Cartel—bribes the police to make sure he can't sell chocolate in their city. To combat this, Wonka and his friends scheme elaborate plans and escape routes to make sure he can still sell his chocolate.



Taken from *Deadline*

The film uses the obvious plot points of a "coming-into-success" story. Wonka starts to succeed, fails, finds a way around his problem, succeeds some more, gives up after failing completely, and then finally completes his goal of selling chocolate. It's not a spoiler to say that Wonka eventually succeeds in creating his chocolate factory, as his factory's golden ticket is the inciting incident behind the original *Chocolate Factory* films. And while a predictable plot might sound boring, *Wonka* is a joy to watch. Maybe it's because of the nostalgic look of the movie. Maybe it's because of Wonka's charismatic assistant Noodle ([Calah Lane](#)). Or maybe it's because mixing up the internet's favorite "it" boy with

expensive musical numbers and associating him with a well-known and loved tale is a sure key to getting viewers invested. Whatever the reason, *Wonka* rides the nostalgia train and throws its own chocolatey charm in to make a predictable, yet amusing, film.

## Timotheé the Tenor

While Timotheé Chalamet is known for his brilliant portrayals of characters like Paul in [Dune](#), Laurie in [Little Women](#), and Elio in the peachy [Call Me by Your Name](#), many were quick to question casting him as a young Willy Wonka for this film. When the trailer for *Wonka* came out, [Chalamet's performance was mimicked for weeks](#). People also thought he didn't look enough like Gene Wilder or [Johnny Depp](#); the actors who played Wonka in 1971's [Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory](#) and 2005's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, respectively. And, other than his famous "[Statistics](#)" rap and him [serenading a very small horse](#) on [Saturday Night Live](#) back in 2020, no one really knew if Chalamet could sing. For a musical, this didn't look too good for the box office payout.



Taken from *Entertainment Weekly*

By no means is Chalamet a perfectly pitched musical god, but his voice is pleasant enough and the melodies are fun and well-fitting so that this doesn't seem to matter. This film didn't need a Broadway-level performer to hit nearly impossible high notes and intricately crafted vocal runs. It needed someone who can carry the ridiculous nature of the film, and Chalamet was great for this. He sounded like

the only halfway decent tenor in a high school's underfunded theater department, but he acted like an eccentric, extremely naïve chocolatier with dreams of starting his own business perfectly. Each of the versions of the iconic "Pure Imagination" in this film matched the vibe well and further cemented the naïve optimism of the young Wonka.

The rest of the cast nails the atmosphere of the film through their songs too. While there's no one near the vocal level of [Idina Menzel](#) or [Jeremy Jordan](#) in the cast, they all have realistic ways of how their characters would sing, which also allows them to not outshine Chalamet. The best song in *Wonka* is titled "[Scrub Scrub](#)." This song follows Miss Scrubbit's ([Olivia Colman](#)) disgruntled staff as they scrub laundry to work off the outrageous amount of debt they accrued after being tricked by the woman so she can keep them as free workers. The song is fun, and easy to get stuck in your head. It also characterizes

these smaller character roles and shows the hopelessness of their situation. While *Wonka*—in musical terms—is by no means the next *Wicked*, the songs are catchy and help to move along the plot and develop the characters.

## Wonka's Wacky World

The tone of *Wonka* is undeniably the best part of the movie. While I would describe the film as cringey, in this case that's not a bad thing. *Wonka* is cringey the same way *Mean Girls* is. Is *Mean Girls* the height of amazing filmmaking? No. Is it extremely quotable and entertaining? Yes. *Wonka* is the same. It's cringey, but in a camp way. Everything is over-the-top; the bigger, the better. Since *Wonka* is a musical and based on a story that also follows the "bigger, better" rule, the tone of the film works great.

The musical parts of the film really help to solidify the reasoning behind the generally over-the-topness of the movie. Anyone who has ever seen a musical, in film or on stage, has probably noticed that things in musicals tend to be a little more dramatized. A character in a musical can't just have a problem. They have to sing about it endlessly, and perform a synchronized dance with a slew of random backup dancers that appear out of nowhere. *Wonka* pulls this exact trope, as Wonka sings "[A Hatful of Dreams](#)," complete with a dance sequence, as soon as he steps foot in the chocolate-obsessed town. Toss musical theater demeanor in with a plot about an outlandish entrepreneur, and you're left with a memorable candy-filled chronicle, suitable for adults and children alike.

*Wonka* is excitement, nostalgia, and wonder wrapped all in one, a surprising glimmer of hope for Hollywood's current remake and spin-off crusade. *Wonka* flips expectations with a predictable but insane narrative, melodic tracks, and a tone that showers musical-movie lovers with everything they could hope for.



**Wonka**

**8.0**  
**Great**

A candy-coated prequel, *Wonka* is the perfect sweet treat to stick into your holiday season watchlist. Pop into the theater, and settle in for a deliciously fun ride, just be sure to bring a chocolate-covered bite to snack on.

**7.0** Narrative — **8.0** Music — **9.0** Tone

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Sources:

[IMDb](#), [IMDb](#), [IMDb](#), [Spotify](#), [RoaldDahl](#), [IMDb](#), [IMDb](#), [EW](#), [IMDb](#), [IMDb](#), [IMDb](#), [IMDb](#), [IMDb](#), [TheMessenger](#), [IMDb](#), [IMDb](#), [YouTube](#), [YouTube](#), [IMDb](#), [IMDb](#), [IMDb](#), [Spotify](#), [IMDb](#), [IMDb](#), [IMDb](#), [Spotify](#)

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