



***Rating: «««* out of 4 stars**

Running Time: 137 min.

It has been quite a run for Hugh Jackman in one of his most memorable roles as the *X-Men* superhero, Wolverine.
Logan
, which marks his ninth onscreen appearance as Wolverine, is by far the darkest tale for the character. Perhaps encouraged by the R-rated hit,
Deadpool
, the filmmakers have been allowed to go down a more adult path (if you consider dropping more f-bombs and adding graphic violence mature). Regardless, this is still a strong movie, bolstered by some solid performances and an attempt to deliver something a little different.

Set several years in the future, human mutations have seemingly stopped and pre-existing mutants died off. A somewhat sickly, hard-drinking Logan (Hugh Jackman), hides away on the fringes of society and keeps a low-profile. Working as a limo driver on the Mexican-American border, he slips back and forth between countries, helping take care of Charles (Patrick

Stewart), now debilitated and suffering from mental illness. Helping the pair is a nurse named Calaban (Stephen Merchant) with exceptional tracking abilities. However, everything changes with the arrival of Laura (Dafne Keen), a mute child who possesses familiar mutant skills. She’s on the run from the sinister Dr. Rice (Richard E. Grant) and his nasty chief of security, Pierce (Boyd Holbrook).

As mentioned, a sense of heaviness permeates this particular story. This is a gloomy, violent and run-down future that looks believably poor and bleak. And there’s some great location and production design work on the hidden desert home of Logan, Charles and Calaban. Most of these characters are in an older and weakened state, leading to some new and unusual challenges for them. There’s plenty of funny banter between the performers, with Calaban standing out. As for the youngster, Laura doesn’t do much in the way of talking and doesn’t stand out quite as strongly as the others, but then again, she isn’t the lead.

The freedom of having an R-rating means Wolverine’s claws draw a lot more blood than they have in the past. There’s no holding back here and so limbs and other body parts are frequently severed. Much of the action is well-handled and even shocking at times. Amusing, although slightly overdone are a series of claw-to-the-skull shots, which work very well early on but do get a little repetitive after the twentieth or thirtieth person finds those long knuckle knives going through their head.

And the movie also loses a bit of momentum towards the third act. It’s first two-thirds are consistently entertaining, but after a confrontation at a farmhouse one expects things to be moving towards their climax. Unfortunately, the pacing slows and it takes a lot longer to get to its resolution than expected. And after a several scenes featuring the child going on the offensive successfully, it seems a little odd to see her and others in real peril while facing off against the very same threat.

Still, these are minor issues. *Logan* is an effective superhero movie that provides plenty of action, great performances and even a little thoughtful meditation on mortality and mentoring as well as the evils of global corporations. Only time will tell whether or not he returns, but if the actor decides to retire the character after this feature, it certainly has been an entertaining run.

By Glenn Kay
For the Sun