

A surefire crowd-pleaser: 'Spider-Man: Homecoming'

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 07 July 2017 10:17



Rating: ««« out of 4

Running Time:
133 min.

We've seen six Spider-Man movies in the past 15 years. That's six and we're not even counting his appearance in Marvel's recent *Captain America: Civil War*. With two of these films being origin stories, one might be understandably reticent to see yet another take on the character (although based on the people around me at the preview screening, I may be the only who feels a bit burnt out). I can report, however, that

Spider-Man: Homecoming

is an enjoyable feature and surefire crowd-pleaser that will entertain most viewers.

Perhaps the wisest decision made is to completely forgo the familiar origin story and introduce Peter Parker (Tom Holland) as a young high school student who already possesses superpowers. Not only is the character going through an extra awkward phase in life because of his transformation, but he also has to deal with being a social outcast.

Of course, he also feels undervalued by Tony Stark (Robert Downey Jr.), who has all but ignored the kid after taking him on as an intern. Frustrated by days of dealing with little more than petty crime and giving out helpful street directions, Parker finally sees a big opportunity after encountering a nasty group of illegal arms dealers led by Adrian Toomes aka The Vulture (Michael Keaton).

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As mentioned, this version manages to put a bit of a new spin on events by making its lead younger, less experienced and at times dealing with situations that are over his head. While it probably could have gone even further to overwhelm Parker by really putting the screws to him, the movie still does enough to make him an underdog. Holland is an empathetic lead as well, veering between enthusiasm and joy at his unusual condition, as well as awkwardness with others in his age group and annoyance at not being taken seriously.

Also helping tremendously is Keaton as the villain. His plight as an out-of-work foreman who has been forced into underground arms deals does add some sympathy to his character. Yet, he is also an intimidating presence when pushed to his limits. There's a great sequence in a car that really allows the actor to exude menace with some pointed looks and verbal threats. His work is so good that one wishes the movie offered more opportunity for him to interact with the various heroes.

However, it isn't all perfect. Some of the humor and banter between the teenagers is hit-and-miss and these kids don't feel nearly as nuanced as the leads. Again, they're all likable if a bit underdeveloped. There's the typical bully (Toni Revolori) and the lead's cheerfully goofy friend (Jacob Batalon) who as written, seems a bit too dim. There are also plenty of moments of teen love with student Liz (Laura Harrier), as well jokes from a school eccentric Michelle (Zendaya). Some of the elements work better than others.

Not all of their interactions result in the intended laughs, although a few gags do hit the mark (a comment about losing students made by a teacher and a post-credits cameo gag are particularly funny). And while it works in the moment, I'm still not entirely sure about the Spidey-suit update. Unlike previous adaptations, it's an AI costume that carries on conversations with the lead and gives him vital information. This addition works well enough but does feel very familiar, almost as if one is watching a web-slinging Iron Man instead of the title character.

Despite some minor caveats, at the end of the day the movie works efficiently and certainly earns its place as a strong Marvel adaptation. *Spider-Man: Homecoming* is not the greatest superhero movie ever, but most of it works and when it really fires on all cylinders, it is a solid and effective superhero tale that will assuredly please any fans of the genre.

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