

## **‘Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets’ takes viewers on a wild ride**

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun  
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**Rating: ««« out of 4**

**Running Time: 137 min.**

*Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets* opens with an absolutely phenomenal montage. It depicts human progress into space over the passing of centuries, eventually leading to the creation of an orbiting space station featured prominently in the film. This gorgeous, quirky and strangely affecting opening ends up emphasizing camaraderie between all beings. The bit is so strikingly good, in fact, that it's pretty much impossible for the rest of the film to top it. Yes, nothing can quite match this sequence, but the feature itself still manages to offer a lot of fun, popcorn entertainment thrills.

Valerian (Dane DeHaan) and partner Laureline (Cara Delevingne) are special operatives for the human federation who police the universe. When they retrieve the last of a cute, nearly extinct species of alien life called Converters, they're immediately called to Alpha, otherwise known as the City of a Thousand Planets. It's a communion of life from across the universe placed together to share their knowledge through the universe. However, Commander Arun Filitt (Clive Owen) reports that Alpha is under attack; areas have been made unlivable and a dark force is threatening it, not to mention wanting to steal the Converter.

This film is from noted French director Luc Besson (*La Femme Nikita*, *Leon: The Professional*, *The Fifth Element*

and  
*Lucy*

) and, as expected, it is visually stunning. Much like his previous sci-fi efforts, it's bold and bright with intense colors popping off of the screen. The camerawork is consistently impressive, with many impressive long takes establishing the big, epic scope. Additionally, the sets dazzle and

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inspire wonder with the characters constantly moving through new and unexpected environments. An early chase through a Big Market set in more than one dimension is lively and fun.

As for the human characters, they’re perfectly serviceable, if not as striking. Valerian has eyes for Laureline, but can’t quite convince her of his seriousness. There’s plenty of back and forth banter between the two and a decent portion of it works, although there isn’t quite as much in the way of onscreen sparks as hoped. And the humor in general is quite broadly played. There are some very silly gags for a young audience, while other moments feel much more serious. Still, a few oddball jokes (one involving a strange beast reacting to potential clothing choices) are just strange enough to earn some laughs.

And there are plenty of odd tangents. The negative to some of the sidelines is that they don’t feel entirely necessary and lead to a lull or two. On a positive note, one is never quite sure exactly where the film is heading, meaning that at least these elements are unexpected. Still, in the end this reviewer appreciated the movie’s eccentricities and peculiarities. It never feels like a processed studio product, but rather a singular individual’s imagination running wild.

Yes, for all of its imperfections and oddness, this feature pretty consistently holds one’s attention for its entire duration. It’s a visual knock-out and as strange as it may be, isn’t quite like anything else out there. *Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets* may not be the best feature ever from this filmmaker, but it’s a consistently fun one (with a few genuinely great scenes) that is always entertaining to watch.

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