

## Video game inspired Rampage is another genre flop

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun  
Friday, 13 April 2018 08:48

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### The adaptation lacks energy, campy-thrills

**Rating:** «« out of «««««

**Running Time:** 107 minutes

It appears that adapting video games to feature film may be one of the trickiest tasks there is. After decades of effort, the results haven't exactly wowed viewers: *Super Mario Brothers*, *Wing Commander*

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*Tomb Raider*

,  
*Hitman*

,  
*Prince of Persia*,

and

*Need for Speed*

being just a few examples. The latest is

*Rampage*

, inspired by an arcade game that allowed players to control giant monsters, trash cities and eat civilians who happened to cross their paths. Honestly, that's not an awful lot of material to base a movie on. So, while the film features a charismatic lead and few inspired moments of lunacy, the results are far from compelling.

The story follows San Diego primate expert Davis Okoye (Dwayne Johnson), who works at a wildlife sanctuary keeping tabs on a friendly albino gorilla named George. When a space station/science lab crashes, it releases three canisters that land in various parts of the country. Unfortunately for George, he happens to be in one of those locales. As a result, he ingests the

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contents, a genetic editing formula causing rapid growth and a mean disposition. As the gorilla becomes a danger, US Agent Harvey Russell (Jeffrey Dean Morgan) gets involved, along with genetic engineer Dr. Kate Caldwell (Naomie Harris). Before long, two other giant beasts arrive, with the genetic trail leading to the sinister Wyden Corporation, run by siblings Claire (Malin Åkerman) and Brett (Jake Lacy).

Johnson is a likable lead who always seems to try his best to entertain audiences. The gorilla George is a CGI creation, yet the actor does all he can to create an onscreen rapport with the animal. It leads to a few low-brow but occasionally effective jokes. And curiously enough, the Davis and George relationship may be the most developed one in the film. As for the action, some early bits involving the creatures devouring prey by popping them into their mouths also result in a chuckle or two. And the climax includes a few impressive effects shots, like one that involves the hero running across a tipped over skyscraper.

Yet there are numerous tonal issues. The dialogue could be sharper and a lot of the one-liners fall flat. Supporting cast member Morgan tries his best to upstage the giant monsters. However, as written, a little of his character's cowboy shtick goes a long way and his propensity to randomly pop up everywhere comes across as ridiculous. Mix this with onscreen scenes of disaster and devastation, as well as stilted attempts at creating an emotional bond between the lead human and gorilla and you've got quite a tonal mess. It actually feels like the movie is constantly hedging its bets. One wishes that the filmmakers had either just gone full out camp or had taken a deadly serious approach.

And sadly, the villains are about as one-note as it gets, leaving the otherwise talented actors very little to work with. They spend most of the movie in an office delivering exposition about their sinister plan. In fact, their sole motivation appears to be financial gain. Frankly, this isn't a particularly interesting or dramatic dynamic to be working from, resulting in antagonists who ultimately don't make much of an impression.

To be fair, this isn't the worst video game adaptation ever made. Kids (or forgiving adults) who just want to watch monsters throw each other around for twenty minutes during the climax or be amused by the film's sometimes baffling logic might get a chuckle or two out of the experience. However, it's hardly quality cinema and lacks even the campy B-movie fun-factor that one might hope for. In the end, *Rampage* isn't as exciting or frenzied as it should be.

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