

Rating: *«««* ***out of*** *«««««*

Running Time: 119 minutes

Two years ago, the R-rated superhero flick *Deadpool* stormed the box office and surprised many movie analysts with a comical, adult-themed (and somewhat crass) take on the Marvel formula. However, it's always difficult to recapture the same kind of magic with an immediate follow-up. Thankfully, *Deadpool 2* is pretty decent as far as sequels go. Yes, it brings more of the same and takes some time to get moving, but it does find its rhythm and incorporates a few new elements that make it distinctive in its own right.

The story begins with Wade Wilson/Deadpool (Ryan Reynolds) describing a series of terrible events that have led him to a dark period in his life. Hoping to have children with significant other Vanessa (Morena Baccarin), the hero quickly finds his family plans squashed. During a brief and ill-fated try-out with the X-Men, the protagonist encounters a mutant teen named Russell (Julian Dennison) who is being pursued by a time-traveling killer named Cable (Josh Brolin). While the brooding Deadpool is less-than-happy to have a kid pestering him, the acquaintance offers a surrogate son and new family member for the superhero.

While the movie is even more frantic with its pop-culture and comic book references, the opening scenes do comes across as a little familiar. Some of the gags work well (including a credits sequence that riffs on James Bond title numbers) although other early snips and comments delivered as the lead wipes out bad guys are hit-and-miss.

Additionally, it takes quite a while for the antagonist to really get involved in the proceedings. Perhaps it was just this reviewer needing time to get used to the characters and get on the same wavelength as the film's rapid-fire riffing and everything-but-the-kitchen-sink feel, but the first third comes across as somewhat scattershot.

Thankfully, as events progress, the movie improves dramatically and the second half of the feature is considerably more effective. When Deadpool decides to form his own league of mutants, naming them X-Force, the jokes really begin to land. His new team is filled with rookies who have unique, sometimes imperceptible and silly abilities, leading to a first mission that does not go smoothly but is hilarious nonetheless. Its effectiveness may simply be due to the fact that at this point, the antihero has more oddball people to interact and trade barbs with. Whatever the reason, the movie jolts to life at this point. Even the action scenes feel zippier, more exiting and considerably funnier.

Personally, the movie also benefits from riffing and openly making fun of the comic book movie universe and its characters. In fact, this entire exercise could almost be considered a parody of the current Marvel superhero film (which is quite welcome).

Just about every aspect of the genre, from the themes, the characters, to the overly familiar stories and plotting are all poked fun at. Even the use of time-travel is lampooned in a post credits sequence that follows the hero going back in time and causing all sorts of chaos (for those sitting through the credits, this series of bits is the last extra in the film).

It has no shame and is all over the place at times, but *Deadpool 2* becomes more and more amusing as it develops. By the time of the absurd and almost heartfelt close, the oddball leads have charmed viewers and provided some amusingly ridiculous situations along the way. Fans of the character, those who enjoy seeing the Marvel world lampooned and anyone just looking for a laugh will more than likely find this sequel to be fun and entertaining.

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By Glenn Kay

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