

Popcorn-munching fun to be had with 'The Tomorrow War'

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 09 July 2021 04:01



Rating: <<< out of <<<<<<

Running Time: 140 minutes

Amazon Studios will exclusively release this film globally on Prime Video on July 2.

Nothing brings a family closer together than time-traveling warfare with an invasive alien species! At least, that is the impression one gets from the new epic, "The Tomorrow War." Admittedly, it's a dramatically overbaked sci-fi/war film, but one that at least manages to provide a few effective and exciting moments of action in between the less-engaging family squabbles.

High-school science teacher and ex-soldier Dan Forester (Chris Pratt,) has a loving wife (Betty Gilpin), and daughter (Ryan Kiera Armstrong), but has cut the family off from his troubled dad, James (J.K. Simmons). The household gets unexpected news when soldiers from the future appear on-field at a World Cup final match to give the planet some bad news. In approximately 28 years, Earth will be invaded and overrun by aliens called White Spikes. With much of civilization destroyed and humans nearing extinction, the time-travelers request additional forces to transport themselves into the future and help ward off the enemy.

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It isn't long before Dan and random citizens like Charlie (Sam Richardson) and Dorian (Edwin Hodge) are drafted for war under the leadership of a brilliant scientist (Yvonne Strahovski) from the future. Dan joins the fray and unexpectedly finds himself dealing with family issues across time.

The opening scenes try to deliver just enough, but not too much, exposition about what is occurring. Still, there's a lot of information to deliver and address and early on, story beats are rushed and hectic. Many of the characters have a background in science and while the movie is noble in its attempts to emphasize the importance of research and knowledge, some of the dialogue delivering these ideas is blunt and stiffly written (additionally, some of the theories and discussion regarding an alien-killing enzyme sounds particularly dubious).

And with a grand-scale extinction event looming, the filmmakers also feel compelled to amplify the personal drama to equally epic levels. In doing so, early exchanges between the central characters are overly-heated. There are also plenty of coincidences that occur as the leads repeatedly cross paths. But while the personal drama is a tough sell, at least the cast is likable enough to carry viewers through the story's clumsier moments.

Individuals like Charlie, who is out-of-his-element as a soldier, and asks a lot of questions about potential time paradoxes and other problematic aspects of the mission, add some levity to the proceedings.

The action sequences ultimately serve as the highlight of the movie. The White Spikes are appropriately intimidating and the inexperience of the crew adds tension to the proceedings. While early attack scenes are a little confusing in terms of who is being devoured, as the movie progresses things are clearer and more exciting. One imaginative bit involves an issue with time-jumping that leaves the unit suddenly dropping out of the sky.

Multiple sequences involving hordes of aliens racing and attacking the terrified soldiers are impressive - later battles on a sea platform and in remote northern Russia deliver plenty of thrills.

Even if the lead's family squabbles don't make a serious imprint, there is popcorn-munching action fun to be had when the film's characters must react to and fight off the threat. As with

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many time-travel tales, the logic on display is questionable. And at times, the movie even feels like an awkward amalgamation of stronger sci-fi titles like "Edge of Tomorrow," "Starship Troopers" and "The Thing." But even if it isn't a classic, "The Tomorrow War" ultimately provides a couple of spine-tingling moments that should amuse action fans.

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