

HITMAN: AGENT 47 is Dead On Arrival

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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out of 4 stars

Video games always make difficult transitions to film. In fact, the Hitman character was already adapted back in 2007. So is the new film, *Hitman: Agent 47*, a reboot or a sequel? Frankly, I'm still not entirely sure. All I can say is that despite constant barrage of blazing guns, there's little in the way of excitement. In fact, it struggles mightily to hold any interest at all over its 90 minutes.

Agent 47 (Rupert Friend) is a genetically engineered assassin with near superhuman abilities. Part of a top secret program that no longer exists, he's a ruthless killing machine who can wipe out rooms full of people without breaking a sweat. His target is Katia (Hannah Ware), a woman with remarkable survival abilities who is on the run and searching for a mysterious man from her past. Also in pursuit is another super-enhanced executioner named John Smith (Zachary Quinto), as well as a ruthless businessman named Le Clerq (Thomas Kretschmann), who is plotting to restart the enhanced assassin business.

From this point on, it's an extended chase as Katia and Agent 47 join forces to solve the mystery and find the missing figure who figures in the creation of both characters. While the movie looks polished and there is some interesting fight choreography, much of the action isn't convincing at all. Amusingly, there are plenty of public shoot-outs in subways and through busy city streets - at no point do the police ever become involved.

The action is also enhanced with less-than-seamless digital effects. Fake motorcycles and riders are shot and bounce off of the asphalt, and digital guards are thrown off various ledges and drop to the ground. At almost no point does any of it look believable. And despite being under constant pursuit, the heroes possess such overwhelming powers that at no time do they seem to be in real danger.

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Literally hundreds of faceless extras run and rappel at Agent 47, only to be shot in the face over and over and over again (those soldiers really should have come up with a better plan of attack). In fact, if you took a drink every time someone in the film was shot with a bullet to the head, you'd be three sheets to the wind inside of ten minutes. Our hero appears so cold, efficient and disinterested in what he's doing that the feeling ends up becoming contagious.

The script doesn't help matters either. It strands the cast with incredibly stilted dialogue between the slaughter scenes, forcing the two leads into solemn discussions on what it means to be human and how their actions truly define who they are. It's amazing that they manage to do this with a straight-face, but that doesn't make it any less wince-inducing to watch. The deadly serious tone in these moments comes across as all the more preposterous when sandwiched between the action flick posturing and over-the-top gunplay.

But the worst crime is the lack of a hook for the audience. There appears to be no actual reason to care about the outcome of the conflict. The roles aren't developed enough to be interesting. And while Diane finds out who the man she can't remember is and learns why everyone wants to find him (naturally, it has something to do with the original genetically enhanced assassin program), the movie never gives us a reason why we as viewers should care. No master plan to destroy the world or even cause a mild fracas is ever revealed. Sure, there's a quick line during the climax suggesting that the technology could be used to create an army, but no one ever elaborates - they're too busy firing bullets randomly into each other's heads.

Some might wonder if the film offers some cheesy laughs. It doesn't. Instead, it's a dull and unmemorable affair that isn't even whacked out enough to enjoy on a surreal level. *Hitman: Agent 47* is pretty terrible. The character may be genetically enhanced, but little to no engineering was done in creating a decent script.