

'Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2' doesn't soar, but still a fun journey

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 05 May 2017 10:45



Rating: «« out of 4

Running Time: 138 min.

Another month, another comic book adaptation. At least this one isn't quite as familiar as some of the other offerings from Marvel. The original feature worked a lot of its magic courtesy of introducing new, interesting characters and a unique, cheeky tone. In *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2*, things don't feel quite as fresh or new and the results are a little more uneven. Still, there's enough fun to be had from the proceedings to earn it a recommendation.

The latest adventure finds Peter Quill (Chris Pratt), Gamora (Zoe Saldana), Drax (Dave Bautista), Rocket (Bradley Cooper) and Baby Groot (Vin Diesel) on the run from an angry planet of aristocrats known as the Sovereign, as well as old enemies like Nebula (Karen Gillan). Adding to the confusion is the arrival of Ego (Kurt Russell) a powerful cosmic being who reveals that he is Quill's father. While the protagonist tries to process this new information and decide whether or not he wants to forge a relationship, various bad guys converge on the heroes.

One can tell that the makers decided to double-down on elements that audiences responded to in the first feature. There's a lot of dancing and action scored to classic 70s tunes. In general, the movie has a goofier, less serious tone. This follow-up is also filled with early 80s references, even in the sound design, which at one point appears to borrow effects from old arcade games like Pac-Man. The latter provides a very funny moment, although in general the humor is a little more forced and doesn't land quite as often.

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And while action-packed in the opening and closing acts, the story gets bogged down in the middle while the characters deal with personal issues. In fact, it feels like it’s covering a lot of the same ground here, from Gamora’s competitiveness with her sister to Quill’s struggles with parental issues. As a result, many of the events have a somewhat repetitive quality and emotionally, the film doesn’t make as powerful an imprint as it did the first time around.

Having said that, there is still plenty of fun to be had overall. The film includes plenty of amusing banter (or more accurately, insults) between the heroes and their foes. Quill gets in a couple of very funny comments after learning more about his history and special gifts. And Kurt Russell is always entertaining to watch and he makes an enjoyable addition to the storyline. It’s a hoot to see a younger version of the performer cavorting in the 80s courtesy of modern digital technology.

Surprisingly enough, it’s the muscle-headed Drax who ends up making the biggest impact. His character essentially steals the movie and delivers many of the film’s most effective gags. Most involve his brusque delivery and what-you-see-is-what-you-get reactions to events, but the comic timing is dead on, whether he’s laughing at his friends, less than subtly dropping a hint or being blunt about the physical attributes of a new acquaintance.

Frankly, this sequel doesn’t work as effectively as the first film and strains a bit to create drama. However, the movie certainly provides enough excitement and laughs to merit a watch. And of course, after the credits start, there are a whopping five bonus scenes that appear. The first one lands the most effective gag, but fans will definitely want to check them all out (even if the significance of some of it was lost on me personally). *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2* doesn’t quite soar to the heights of its predecessor, but it’s still an enjoyable journey.

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