

‘Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3’ is one of the MCU’s strongest recent entries

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Rating: ««««

out of «««««

Running Time: 149 minutes

This feature from Walt Disney Pictures and Marvel Studios opens exclusively at theaters on Friday, May 5.

Back in 2014, few would have predicted that one of Marvel Studios’ most successful comic book adaptations would involve a band of little-known, oddball heroes. However, that’s exactly what happened with *Guardians of the Galaxy*, which was one of the highest grossing and best reviewed Marvel chapters during its release. The characters were unique and engaging and the interplay between them was hilarious, with much credit going to director/co-writer James Gunn.

Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3 is the latest and presumably final chapter in the series. As such, the tone is bittersweet and more somber than in previous entries. But despite the heavier elements, the likable cast, amusing banter and heartfelt farewell does eventually save the day.

It has been six years since the last official sequel, but the events of *Avengers: Infinity War* and

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Avengers: Endgame

have left a mark on the leads. Peter Quill (Chris Pratt) is a mess, pining over the loss of team member and significant other, Gamora (Zoe Saldana). For those needing a refresher, she died and was later resurrected with no memory of Quill, leaving the group for the Ravagers crime syndicate.

Things become even grimmer for Quill, Drax (Dave Bautista), Nebula (Karen Gillan), Mantis (Pom Klementieff), Rocket (voiced by Bradley Cooper), Groot (voiced by Vin Diesel) and Kraglin (Sean Gunn) when the powerful Adam Warlock (Will Poulter) barges in. This force of nature brutally attempts to take a specific team member to a figure known as The High Evolutionary (Chukwudi Iwuji). With this Guardian’s life hanging in the balance, the heroes must travel to bizarre and strange worlds in order to save their friend.

This story seems focused primarily on Quill and Rocket. Specifically, the lingering effects of past personal traumas that neither can bring themselves to talk about or deal with. The theme certainly doesn’t sound like a breezy ride and the tone is admittedly grimmer. The slow reveal of Rocket’s backstory is sad and painful, while Quill spends a lot of time in vain trying to get the antagonistic Gamora to remember him. But while the Rocket subplot doesn’t deliver laughs, it works on an emotional level and makes the character even more endearing.

And more and more verbal gags do land as the story progresses. Quill’s sad pestering of Gamora includes some funny exchanges as he attempts to impress her and show others that he can be charming.

There’s a very entertaining subplot involving Kraglin and Cosmo the Spacedog (voiced by Maria Bakalova) that pays off nicely at the close of the film. Even adversary Warlock earns some smiles when his failings and child-like intelligence level is revealed. The back-and-forth bickering between all the characters is entertaining.

As for the main villain, the stakes are certainly raised with the presence of villain The High Evolutionary. The scientist is determined to create the perfect species and wipe out any of his experiments that don’t meet his standards. He’s a powerful force, but unfortunately the character is asked to chew a lot of scenery. This foe could have been even more frightening had he exuded a quiet menace rather than indulge in constant screaming episodes.

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As for the action, it’s epic and impressive to witness. There are a couple of creatively shot fights, including one dizzying master shot that follows the leads down a lengthy corridor as they square off against a mass of enemies. Each character gets their moment as the camera moves and jumps from character to character in the heat of battle.

Yes, the final product isn’t perfect and some may be put off by the darker tone, but this is a finale that has to address the underlying issues of its protagonists. Thanks to the writing and cast, most of the dramatic elements resonate and leave an impression. *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3* and its distinctive characters have a big, beating heart and soul, which elevates the feature over many of its contemporaries and make it one of the stronger recent entries in the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

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