

'The Marvels' is one of the MCU's weakest efforts

Written by gallupsun
Friday, 10 November 2023 10:26

Rating: 2 out of 4

Running Time: 105 minutes

This motion picture from Disney and Marvel Studios opens on Friday, Nov. 10.

It's been quite a ride for Marvel Studios over the last 15 years, with some 32 superhero films and more than a dozen series on various streaming services. A lot of information has been delivered and recently there have been more and more references to T.V. programs in the movie franchise. Generally, this hasn't been a big issue, but the latest film, *The Marvels*, is something of a head-scratcher in that a fine knowledge of the Disney+ shows

Ms. Marvel

and

WandaVision

appears vital to appreciating this effort.

As a reviewer walking into the picture cold, the film feels jumbled and confusing rather than exciting.

Carol Danvers aka Captain Marvel (Brie Larson) has been in deep space dealing with a civil war between alien humanoids called Kree and shapeshifting Skrulls. Close friend Monica Manbeau (Teyonah Parris), who was a child in the previous film, has grown up and is working with Nick Fury (Samuel L. Jackson) in space, investigating a series of space/time portal anomalies. As the film begins, teenage mutant Kamala Khan, who calls herself Ms. Marvel (Iman Vellani), comes under attack by forces threatening to take her bracelet, which possesses unique powers. Thanks to the item, the three heroes find themselves unexpectedly swapping places across the universe. They soon become aware of the Dar-Benn (Zawe Ashton), a Kree warrior with a similar bracelet who wants to open portals in order to steal natural resources from other worlds.

As mentioned, the film assumes viewers are very familiar with Manbeau and Khan, as the chaos starts immediately and the three use their specific set of skills to fight off Kree enemies. There's an expository reference or two in the middle of battles (and sometimes after these

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confrontations) to events that have allowed them to develop their abilities, but the details are unclear and underdeveloped. In fact, for this reviewer the initial impression was similar to walking into a program already in progress and attempting to play catch up to determine exactly who everyone is and why these events are occurring.

The cast are all charismatic and the tone is lighter than other films of its ilk, which allows for some comic interplay during early battles as the characters spend time together. Strange alien cats known as Flerken are used in a bizarre manner late in the picture, and the leads visit a unique faraway world where the population only communicates through song. And naturally, Nick Fury offers a few amusing comments as his space station is threatened. These bits do offer a chuckle or two, but nothing significant that makes a lasting impression.

Instead, it is primarily concerned with rushing through personal drama as well in its attempts to reach its destination as quickly as possible. The screenplay attempts to bring up a subplot between Manbeau and Danvers, who has vanished for years during her extended period of time in outer space, but the potential isn't developed or maximized. It is resolved with a line or two between the characters and a few tears.

This reviewer also would have liked more attention paid to the villain, whose personal suffering and desire for vengeance could have been emphasized more to make the character into an even bigger menace.

One assumes there was more material eliminated for the sake of pacing, but the result is a jarring effort that will leave casual fans and newbies with questions about the characters and events. The filmmakers haven't given enough time with the leads to let the audience relate to what they're experiencing or feel any sense of palpable tension.

While it has a few entertaining moments, The Marvels is one of the weakest efforts in the Marvel Cinematic Universe and is a rarity in that it might have benefitted from a longer running time and extended narrative.

NOTE: For those interested, there is one extra sequence after the first set of closing credits, but oddly enough, no final bonus clip at the very end of the picture.

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