

'Jack Reacher: Never Go Back' is simply unremarkable

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 21 October 2016 01:50



Rating: «« out of 4 stars

Running Time: 118 min.

To be honest, I wasn't that big a fan of Tom Cruise's first foray as Jack Reacher, a tough-as-nails ex-Major who can't help but find trouble wherever he wanders. Frankly, I can't remember much about that movie, other than some particularly stiff, hard-boiled dialogue between the characters that just didn't play.

Regardless, a new thriller has arrived in the form of *Jack Reacher: Never Go Back*. It corrects a few of the issues I had with the previous installment and replaces them with new problems.

The story finds Jack Reacher (Tom Cruise) stopping various crimes while traveling across the country to meet Major Susan Turner (Cobie Smulders) for dinner. However, when he arrives, he finds that she's been arrested by military police. It all revolves around weapons that have gone missing.

When he inquires, Reacher's put behind bars as well. Naturally, the two plot an escape and attempt to solve the mystery, even with an assassin (Patrick Heusinger) and his team in pursuit. Complicating the matters is teenager Samantha (Danika Yarosh), who is targeted because there's a chance that she may be Reacher's illegitimate daughter.

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The script is still filled with tough-guy banter, although it's not quite as eye-rolling this time around. Reacher's partnering with Turner and the scowling youngster Samantha offer some opportunities for interplay and humor. And yes, it does result in an amusing line as well as a funny observation or two.

Unfortunately, the concept isn't fully utilized. Turner and Reacher are almost too similar to build up much contrast or tension between them and the hero's interplay with surly potential daughter is all by-the-numbers stuff.

The action is capably handled, with the leads performing plenty of well-choreographed fights as they race from location to location, and the odd bone-cracking moment is wince-inducing. Yet there remains a certain repetitiveness to the proceedings.

This is a chase movie, with various persons arriving to arrest, beat up, or kill our hero. He stoically stands still, tells them that they've made a big mistake and then proceeds to rough them up without too much trouble. It happens again and again, and after a while, viewers feel no concern for the protagonists.

And certain story elements strain to suspend disbelief. Reacher and Susan argue about the safety and welfare of Samantha as they're being pursued, then immediately wander off on their own to kill some bad guys and leave her completely vulnerable.

The youngster doesn't do much to help herself over the course of events, at times behaving ridiculously (texting, ordering room service with a credit card) and getting the group into unnecessary danger. I understand that she's a kid, but surely the various attempts on her life should have dissuaded her from giving away their position.

The hand-to-hand action is well shot and the movie itself certainly moves at a fast clip. However, it's all a little flat and the bland story doesn't end up inspiring much in the way of excitement. In fact, there's nothing particularly remarkable about it at all... even the villains are strangely typical and don't have any personality traits or ticks to help make them stand out (except for taking beatings).

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For action junkies, it'll do in a pinch, but overall *Jack Reacher: Never Go Back* is the type of film that, appropriately enough, most won't ever feel compelled to re-watch after a single viewing.

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