

Entertainment

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Spiderman aspires to build a better web site

By Nate Rhone
Staff Writer

"Spider-Man 2" has all the elements of a good, but not great, superhero motion picture. A worthy sequel to the 2002 blockbuster, Spider-Man 2 will deposit fans somewhere on the satisfaction spectrum between quietly pleased and overjoyed. Although not as economical with its scenes as the first Spider-Man, this film nevertheless advances the leftover threads from its predecessor, tells its own self-contained tale, and dangles enough bait to hint at where "Spider-Man 3" will be heading.

The movie - at least the first half - is a little light on action and heavy on talk. This is not an inherently bad thing, except that a lot of the dialogue relates to Peter Parker's soul-searching: should he sacrifice his inner desires for the greater good of mankind (cue his dead uncle's pronouncement: "With great power comes great responsibility") or give up crime fighting to become an ordinary guy, pursue his dreams, and get the girl. Fortunately, the second hour, which contains all three major action sequences, is better paced, leading to a rousing climax that works on multiple emotional levels. There are a trio of endings, all of which satisfy in their own ways.

"Spider-Man 2" picks up a couple of years after the conclusion of the

original Spider-Man. By this time, the costumed alter-ego of geeky Peter Parker (Tobey Maguire) has become a New York City legend. Despite being decried by the Daily Bugle as a "menace," Spidey (as he is affectionately known) is as big a hero to some as he is a villain to others. In staying true to his calling as a crime fighter, Peter must stay away from the girl of his dreams. Mary Jane Watson (Kirsten Dunst) loves Peter, and Peter loves her, but he can never let her know, because he's afraid his enemies would use that information against them. So he pines away in silence, and she becomes engaged to an astronaut.

Meanwhile, a brilliant physicist named Dr. Otto Octavius (Alfred Molina), who is working for Peter's best friend, Harry Osborne (James Franco), has mastered a way to generate a controlled fusion reaction that can provide enough energy to fuel an entire city. Using mechanical arms grafted into his spinal column, he begins to manipulate the mini-sun he creates, but things go disastrously wrong. When the dust has settled, Dock Ock is no longer the man he was - he's insane and obsessed, and determined to rid Manhattan of Spider-Man. But, like Clark Kent in "Superman 2", Peter has decided to abandon his powers so he can love a woman - and just at the time when the world most needs him.

Tobey Maguire is back as the web-crawler and Kirsten Dunst makes her

second appearance as his one true love. James Franco shows a marked improvement in his acting as the conflicted Harry, whose desire to fill his father's shoes is matched only by his hatred of Spider-Man. The return of so many familiar faces (including Cliff Robertson as Uncle Ben and Willem Dafoe as the Goblin in cameos) assures a strong sense of continuity with the first film. If there's an acting standout, however, it's not any of the major players. Instead, it's

J.K. Simmons as J. Jonah Jameson, the publisher of the Daily Bugle. Simmons was one of Spider-Man's small pleasures. Here, in an expanded role, he dominates every scene he's in with his perfect timing and his drill sergeant-like delivery of dialogue. Simmons not only embodies the Jameson from the comic books, he enhances the character.

The special effects are, on the whole, a little less successful than in the previous outing - probably because there are more of them. At times, especially during some of the complex battle maneuvers or when he's slinging his way high above Manhattan, it's pretty obvious that Spider-Man is computer generated. The key to CGI is not to overuse the technique. "Spider-Man" flirted with the line. "Spider Man 2" crosses it, although barely, and not in a way that it becomes a serious detriment. And there are some marvelous scenes, such as when Spider-Man tries to stop an out-of-control train, or when Peter Parker leaps atop Mary Jane to keep her from harm's way.

"Spider-Man 2" is about 20 minutes too long. Although Sam Raimi's direction is generally solid (and, in some scenes, flawless), the film's middle act has instances when it seems repetitive and exposition-heavy. The strength of the climax and denouement almost renders such concerns moot, but they cannot be completely dismissed, since they prevent this film from ascending to the pinnacle of superhero movies. Nevertheless, even though it does not eclipse "Superman", "Hulk", or even "X-Men 2", "Spider-Man 2" proves that this series has plenty of juice left. As long as this creative team remains in place, I look forward to more adventures with my friendly neighborhood Spider-Man.



The anarchy of the robots

By Corey Freeman
Staff Writer

"I, Robot" takes place in Chicago circa 2035, a city where spectacular new skyscrapers share the skyline with landmarks like the Sears (but not the Trump) Tower. The tallest of the buildings belongs to U.S. Robotics, and on the floor of its atrium lobby lays the dead body of its chief robot designer, apparently a suicide.

Detective Del Spooner is on the case. Will Smith plays Spooner, a Chicago Police Department detective who doesn't believe it was suicide. He has a deep-seated mistrust of robots, despite the famous Three Laws of Robotics, which declare, above all, that a robot must not harm a human being.

"Robot" makes Spooner into another one



of those movie cops who insults the powerful, races recklessly around town, gets his badge pulled by his captain, solves the crime and survives incredible physical adventures. In many of these exploits he is accompanied by Dr. Susan Calvin (Bridget Moynahan), who also serves as the love interest and the converted disbeliever in the movie.

Over all on an academic scale, "I Robot" merits a C+.

The story line is nothing new, but the special effects including the robots karate-like fighting moves, computerized chase scenes, and the charisma of Will Smith, make this movie averagely entertaining. This is not a scholar's movie, but is a good old-fashioned American sci-fi action flick.

JULY 16

Twentieth Century Fox presents a film directed by Alex Proyas. Written by Jeff Vintar and Akiva Goldsman. Suggested by Isaac Asimov's book. Running time: 115 minutes. Rated PG-13 (for intense stylized action and some brief partial nudity). Starring Will Smith, Bridget Moynahan, Bruce Greenwood, Alan Tudyk, Chi McBride, and James Cromwell Directed by Alex Proyas & written for the screen by Akiva Goldman and Jeff Vintar, suggested by the book by Isaac Asimov 2004

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