

Dedicated to discovering up and coming actors and rising stars from all over the world

January 2020

# FILM CENTRAL

THE VERDICT ON  
BUMBLEBEE



GLASS REVIEW

Starring James McAvoy,  
Bruce Willis & Samuel L. Jackson

AACTA'S

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# FILM CENTRAL

## CONTENTS

- 6 Feature Story: One on one interview with rising star - Emma Barnes
- 12 Spotlight: All the glitz and glam at the Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts Award
- 16 Movie Review: Atomic Blonde
- 18 Movie Review: The Hitman's Bodyguard
- 20 Movie Review: Glass
- 22 Movie Review: Bumblebee
- 24 Movie Review: The Disaster Artist
- 26 Movie Review: Justice League
- 28 Movie Review: The Punisher
- 30 Movie Review: Wonder Woman

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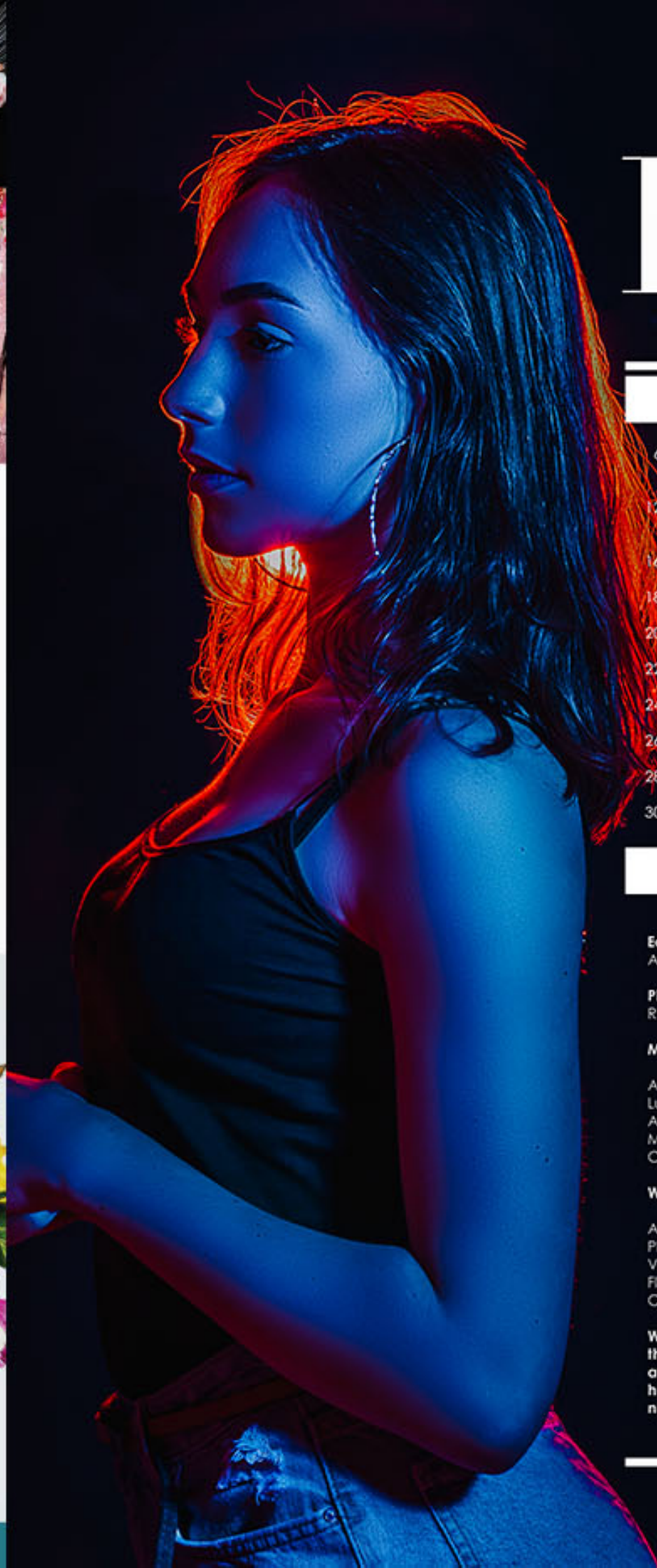
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# FILM CENTRAL

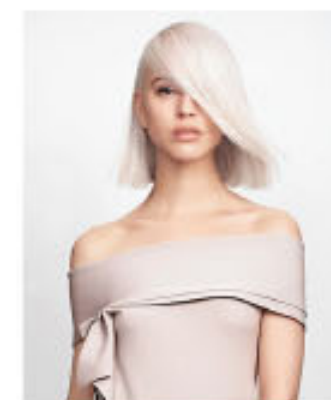


We are so pleased and excited to bring you the very first comeback issue of Film Central Magazine. We are all about promoting promising and upcoming actors from all over the world. In the broader picture, Film Central is for anyone who is passionate about the acting and entertainment industry and would like to be kept informed about those issues that are most pertinent to continued success.

Here at Film Central we like to have fun for sure. But, there's a consciousness and an ethical slant that drives the stories we wish to present. In this edition you will find a splash of industry tips amongst our profile pieces. There are also some great advice pages and career tips. It's a must-read for any aspiring actor or entertainer.

So, if you like movies and TV shows you will certainly love Film Central Magazine.

Alex A  
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## RIISING STAR SPOTLIGHT: GET TO KNOW EMMA BARNES

Some people come into this world born to do something. This is exactly the case with Emma Chelsey Barnes – born with not only the talent but with the drive as well.

Immersed in the performing industry since the age of 5, Emma not only involved herself in school plays, she expanded her knowledge of her craft by attending a performing arts school after her normal school hours and on weekends. She also took up dance lessons, music lessons and was involved in a choir where she was able to travel to Hong Kong and China to perform. Her passion for acting has allowed her to train in Los Angeles, New York, Paris and she is now a graduate of the Western Australia Academy of Performing Arts.

For Emma, there are so many aspects to acting that she enjoys. She loves being able to tell stories and "...exploring different parts of yourself to find the character..." and being able to share that character's journey with an audience. Acting is also an avenue where she has been able to explore human behavior and to use it as a form of expression.

While rejection, and the constant challenge of surmounting it, is ever-present in the life of an actor, the positive experiences that come along in a career make it worth it. A recent role is a perfect example of this for Emma. Though the 23-year old is a relative newcomer to the industry, her theatre debut in Melbourne this year (as part of the play, 'Pornography' by Simon Stevens at the Malthouse) might just be "...the best role I will ever get to play... I absolutely loved my character and enjoyed every minute on stage..."

Even though she has met a plethora of interesting and creative individuals in her career so far, it is the directors that hold a special place in Emma's heart. Directors such as David Myles, Craig Iloff and Amanda Worthington-Browne "...who have given me great roles to play and have trusted me with the material..." Their passion and investment in their work is truly inspiring to her.

The young Australian actress still has a ways to go to build up a sizable portfolio but Emma has already learned some very important lessons that stand her in good stead in ensuring not only a successful career, but also a happy, well-balanced life beyond it. Being able to not take one's self too seriously is of vital importance and "...you also have to be confident, courageous, humble, patient, motivated, proactive, determined, resilient and focused..." "I have also learned that you must also live your life... actors need to be able to draw from personal experience and the more well-rounded you are as a person, the deeper the well for you to draw from for the characters you will play...it is important to have other interests outside of the 'business'..." And for Emma, 'other interests' include nearly being "...qualified as a professional dog trainer/behaviour consultant (studying at the moment) I love animals..."

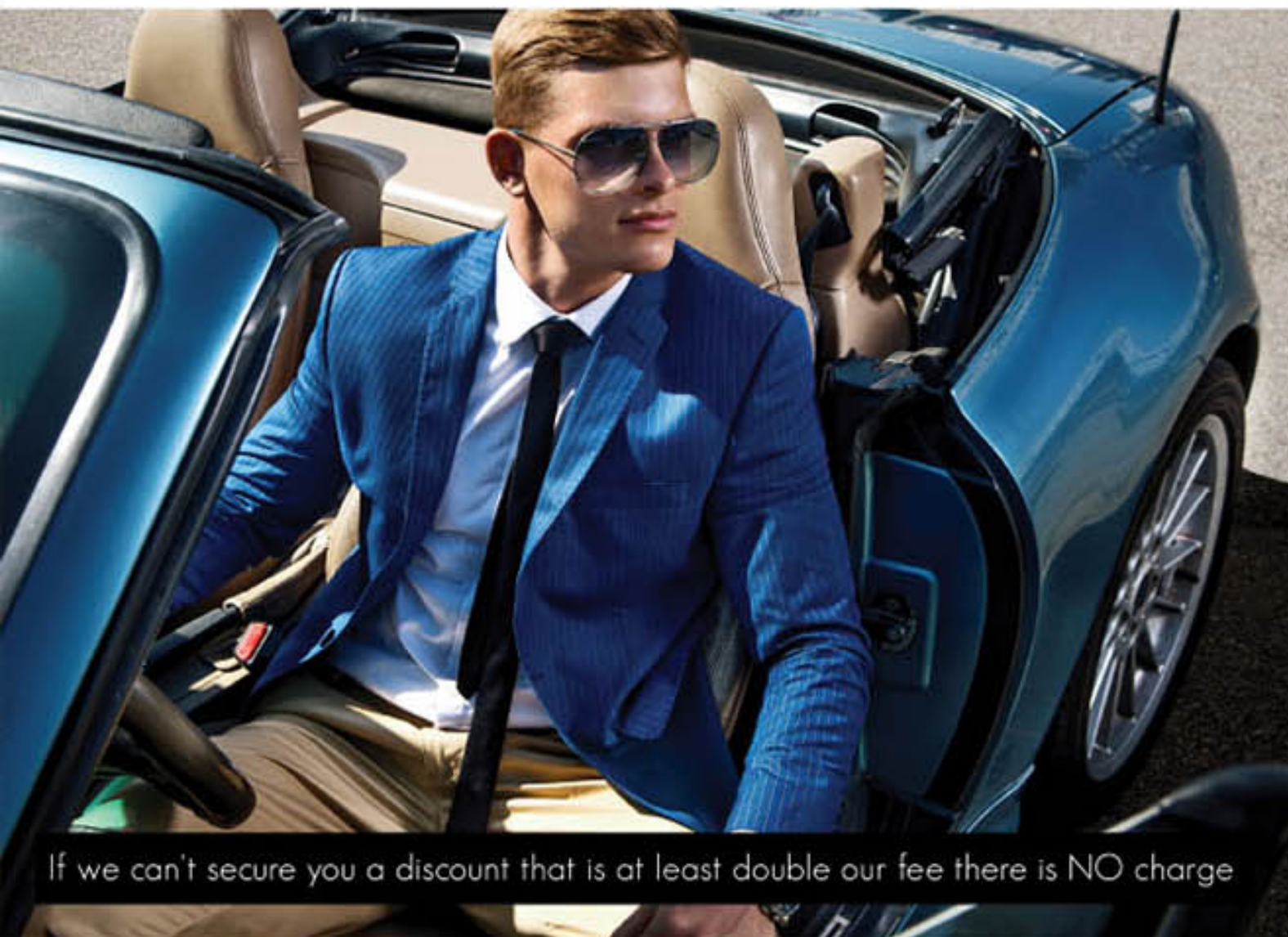
Emma Chelsey Barnes already possesses the talent, drive, attitude and work ethic guaranteed for her continued success and added to that, a family that's stood by her from the beginning – "...They drove me around to all my classes, rehearsals, workshops, concerts as a kid and to every show I have done so thanks for that guys! Cheers!" There really is nowhere for this young lady to go but up!







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## ALL THE GLITZ AND GLAMOUR OF THE AACTA AWARDS

The #MeToo and #Time'sUp movement have swept the world and undoubtedly gained momentum in various award ceremonies all over the world. The AACTA awards were no exception to this rule. Despite the somber atmosphere surrounding the screen industry, the show must go on.

The AACTA awards were split into two parts: the AACTA Industry Luncheon was the precursor event to the Red Carpet ceremony, which was on the 6th December, held at the stunning Star Event Centre.

Highlights of the Luncheon includes: Osamah Sami's *All Wedding* which won Best Original Screenplay, *RAAKACKA*, a show created by YouTube sensations, Danny Philippou and Micheal Philippou, won the online viewing award and *Lion*, scooping up the majority of the nominated categories including: Best Cinematography, Best Editing, Best Sound, Best Original Music Score, Best Costume Design and Best Production Design.

Fast forward to the 7th December: The StarCentral team had set up camp at 1:30 pm on the dot at the very end of the media trench. In an hour or so, the stars came reeling down the crimson carpet at the Star Event center.

Paparazzi occupied themselves in the congested hub of space, battling each other for the best spot to get their money shots for their respected media outlets. In an hour and a half, the StarCentral team was being productive and chasing up the stars. It was definitely more than enough of a day's work for us.

The word of the night was *LION*. Although, by then it was a predictable win but rightfully so. It was enriched with raw emotion and compelling narrative of an Indian-Australian, Saroo who used Google maps to track down his biological mother. The film won Best Supporting Actor, Best Supporting Actress, Best Film, Best Direction and Best Actor, etc.

Notable television wins are *Top of the Lake: China* won four AACTA awards including best television series and Best Guest appearance, which is Nicole Kidman's second AACTA award after being awarded for Best Supporting Actress in *Lion*.

Hugo Weaving won the best actor in a lead performance for the *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, while Emma Booth won best lead actress for *Hounds of Love*. The trailblazer award which acknowledges an actor/actress' acting successes that paved the path for aspiring young actors and actress went to Simon Baker.

Another first was introduced at the award ceremony, the inaugural Best Asia film award. It is the Academy's attempt to further acknowledge Australia's Asia-Pacific counterparts in film in the name of diversity. This award was won by India's *Dangal*, a biographical sports drama woman wanting to compete for Gold at the Commonwealth Games.

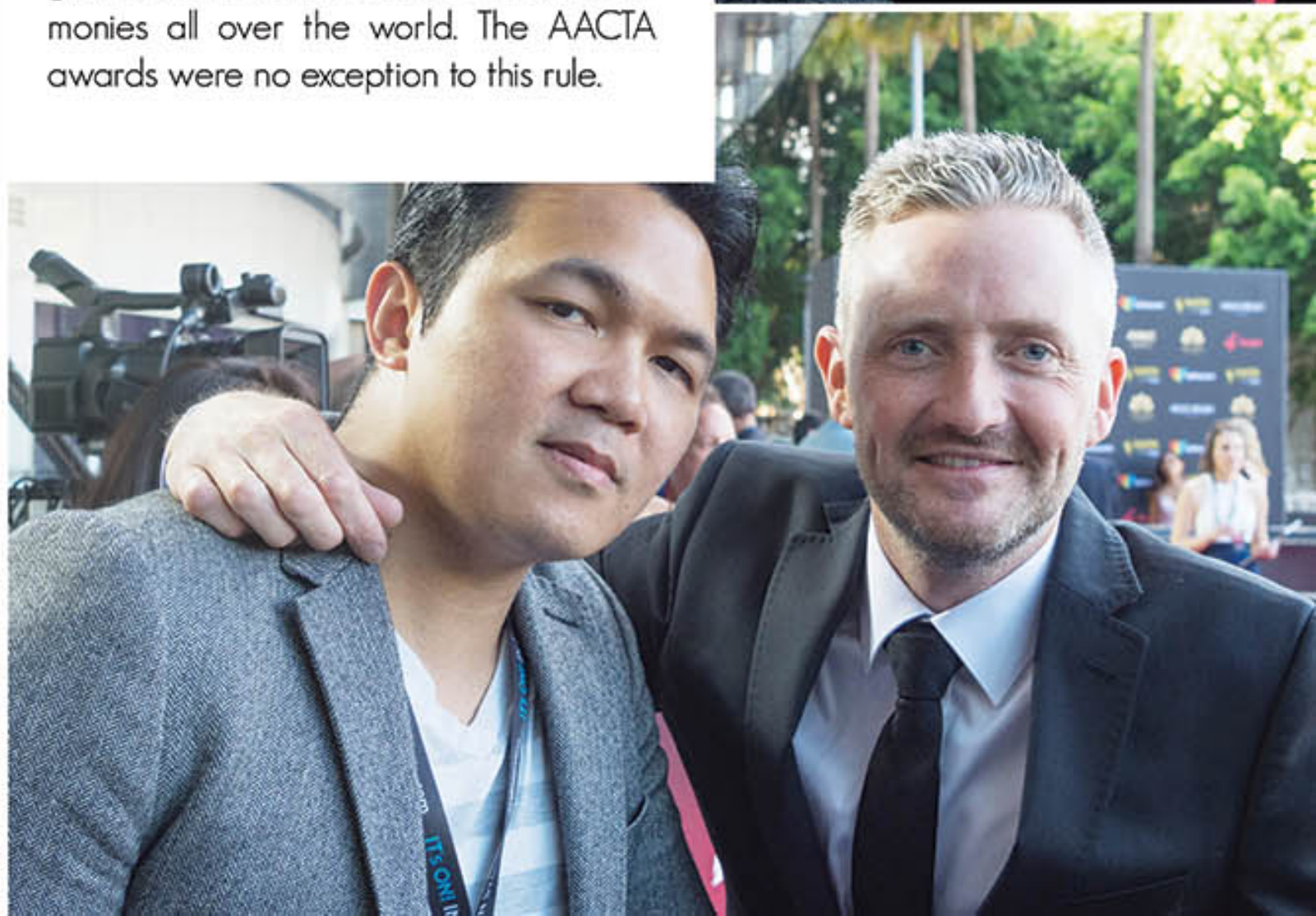
Other highlights of the night, includes an awkward off-colored banter between the charming Osamah Sami and a clueless Sophie Monk about diversity, an ironic anecdote Russell Crowe attempted to teach the audience about sensitivity and the humorous Phillip Noyce's speech when he graciously received the Longford Lyell award.

One take you might want to take amongst the midst of a bleak zeitgeist came from Phillip Noyce: "Well as I was told Aggie, Albie, and David Perry, back in 1968 when I was 18, that anyone could make a movie. I can assure you with today's technology; it's easier than it's ever been and it's easier through the internet to find an audience, or you need today is an iPhone and idea and courage."

And, with those wise words thrust upon the young generation of filmmakers by an Australian film legend, it is safe to say that there is always a silver lining of courage and hope in every grey cloud, even though it's about to rain down on a parade.



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## ATOMIC BLONDE



Editorial credit: Tinseltown / Shutterstock.com

## MOVIE REVIEW

Anyone can be a bad ass, doesn't matter how old you are, what nationality you are or what age you are. Liam Neeson proved in "Taken" that actors you don't expect can take on roles you would never have believed and kick ass forms of ass in it. Charlize Theron has been physically and mentally preparing for this role ever since her work on "Mad Max: Fury Road," and it shows. There's been a compelling need for strong female heroes/ass kickers in Hollywood lately (well, forever actually). Thanks to the success of wildly successful comic book adaptations like "Wonder Woman," it's made things easier for other actresses to kick out the glass ceilings and create their own iconic heroes and characters to be recognized. "Atomic Blonde" is one of those characters, though hero might be a strong choice of word.

"Atomic Blonde" takes place during the fall of the Berlin wall. MI6 Agent Lorraine Broughton (Charlize Theron) is sent into Berlin to meet with contact John Percival (James McAvoy) to recover a priceless list from whoever and whatever comes gunning her way and to bring it back at all costs. This list contains the identities of every undercover agent working around the world and could prove deadly if delivered or sold into the wrong hands. Lorraine must punch, kick, fight and shoot her way through endless hordes of ruthless killers all gunning for her head.

Charlize Theron truly feels at home in this role. She's stone cold serious, a wicked fighter and her fight scenes with countless thugs are not only impressive, their intensely gritty and realistic. Many films like "The Bourne Identity" or the "Transporter" films rely on over the top, outlandish fight scenes that make the hero look like an indestructible martial arts machine. "Atomic Blonde" feels grittier, less stylish and more authentic with its brutality. There's an extensive fight sequence in a stairwell that reaches a point where Theron and the thug she's fighting have to actually stop and relax for a minute because they're so exhausted from fighting.

The catchy soundtrack will keep the movie and the beat grooving from start to finish, it's one of the best soundtracks I've heard to a film this year. James McAvoy proves he is a treasure and a delight in any film he's in. My only beef with his performance is that we don't get enough of it as I love everything he says in every scene he's in. Theron does well as Lorraine. She provides ample amount of intensity to the role; fitting into it seamlessly well. I'm aware this story is based off a graphic novel; however, if the point was to make this appear a launching vehicle for more "adventures" with this character in future stories, she doesn't really make the character THAT likable. Very little is explained about her or her past and we don't see enough of a personality to know if we're supposed to care or not on whether we see more of Lorraine Broughton in future films.

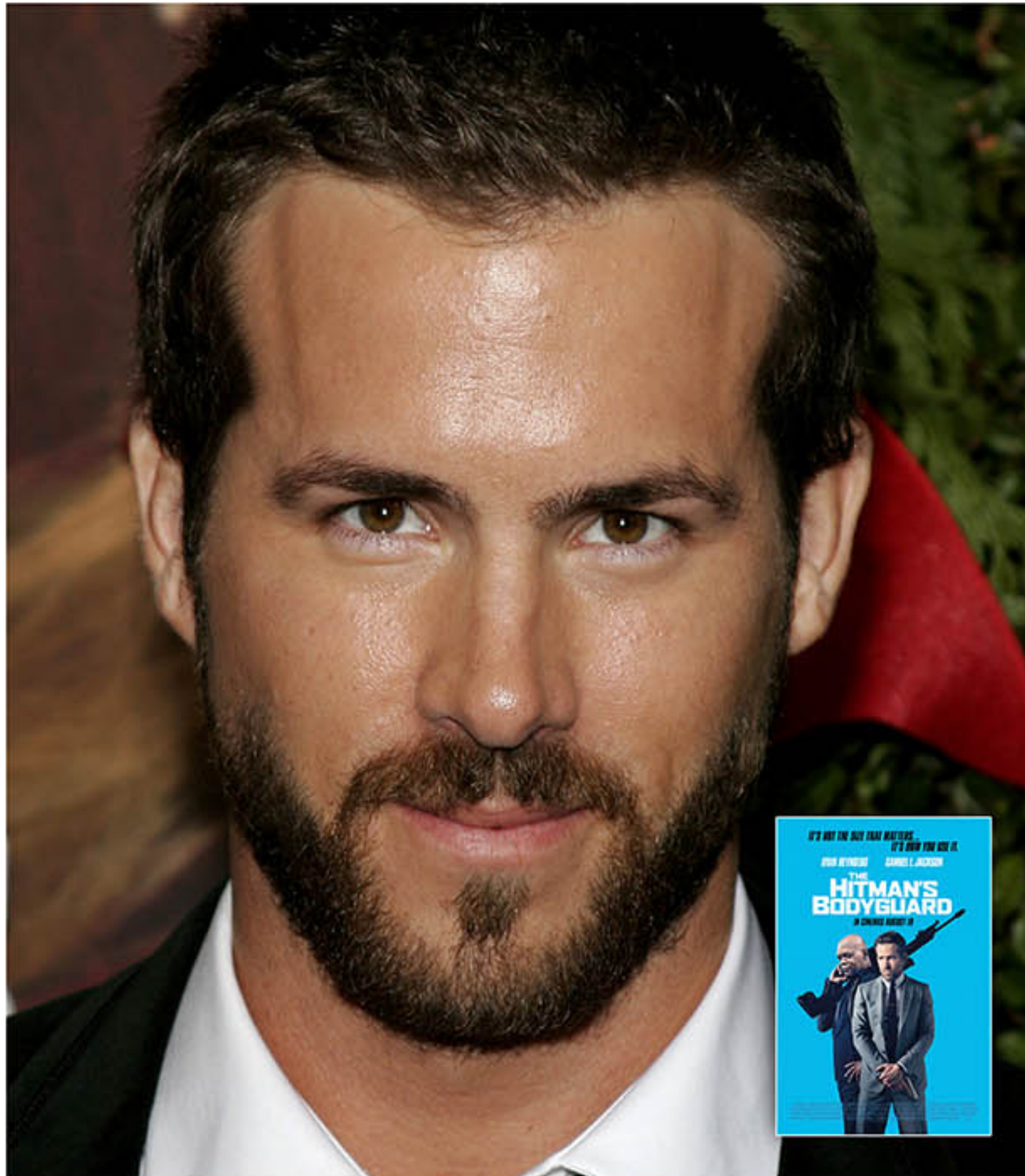
For a tough as nails spy movie, the plot certainly leaves something to be desired. The story is paper-thin, too much effort goes into too many twists at the end to make a difference, and eventually, only the action scenes hold any lingering speck of your interest. This plot has been used in almost EVERY OTHER spy movie, so much so it just feels like a cop-out plot device everyone copies and pastes to their spy story because no one can cough up anything better, and even if this story came directly from the graphic novel, that still doesn't make it any less unoriginal. I am by no means saying that Theron is bad at what she does in this film; I am saying that the reason why she is doing what she does in this film is flimsy and poorly replicated.

Overall, "Atomic Blonde" is average at best. The realistic, ultra-bad ass fight scenes and the bouncing soundtrack are easily the only things really worth coming to see here. The message and figure represented here are both very good ones and much needed in our time of rising female stars and superheroes, but much like the female "Ghostbusters" movie, this isn't exactly the right way to go about doing it. Theron and McAvoy rock the house but with a plot this thin and this run of the mill, there's not much keeping this movie fresh in your minds. It's a fun ride but only if you're looking for a cheap one with a small price tag because this really wasn't worth an expensive rental fee.

WHERE TO WATCH: AMAZON | RATING: 2/5 STARS



## THE HITMAN'S BODYGUARD



Editorial credit: Tinseltown / Shutterstock.com

## MOVIE REVIEW

Movie genres can be as fickle as fashion trends. One day this can be hot and on everyone's minds and lips, the next; it'll be gone and buried so deep that no one will ever dig it up again. Westerns have died out (thankfully), and up until the review in question, another movie trope/genre that had all but vanished was the buddy comedy movie genre. Slapping two actors who don't seem like they'd make a good fit and hoping movie magic strikes. Sometimes it works like Jackie Chan and Chris Tucker (The Rush Hour trilogy), and other times it ends up as a colossal misfire that fails to spark such as Eddie Murphy and Owen Wilson (I Spy). In the case of "The Hitman's Bodyguard", the buddy comedy formula is back in full R rated force.

After suffering a massive loss of credibility as the world's best bodyguard, Michael Bryce (Ryan Reynolds) is roped into a high profile protection case by his ex-girlfriend (Elodie Yung). Bryce has to keep a hitman (Samuel L. Jackson), who has tried to kill him a number of times, alive to testify against a Russian dictator (Gary Oldman) and stop him from going free and returning to power. Now the world's best bodyguard and hitman are stuck together, trying to avoid getting killed by every mercenary hunting them down, and trying not to kill each other long enough to make it to court on time.

Buddy comedy films rely strictly on the simple element of having two actors piss each other off to the point they want to kill each other, only to end up having them create a surprisingly unbreakable team; sort of like a messed up version of a screwball comedy film. While the testifying witness angle is nothing new (16 Blocks, The Client), you don't feel the weight of the banality of the plot as long as Jackson and Reynolds are both on screen together. These guys are a mouthy pair and they work perfectly together by being an imperfect duo. Jackson and Reynolds are both mouthy stars, equipped with so many one liners and smart ass wisecracks; one has to wonder if the pair improvised half their arguments just to see who could out-mouth the other. They're both too funny for their own good.

The pair plays off each other well, each one having a hang up that justifies their chosen professions, and more importantly, their choices they've made in their relationships. I like the idea of love being this strange, stressful link that brings them both together with their backstories. Elodie Yung pulls out a much better (and more likable) performance than her turn as Elektra in Netflix's "Daredevil" series, and Salma Hayek playing Jackson's psycho-prisoner wife was an even more hilarious addition to an already satisfying kill crazy comedy.

Despite the violence and bloody body count, this movie thankfully goes more towards comedy than a dark comedy. These guys animosity towards each other never gets boring or feels like it's getting repetitive, and the action keeps escalating things to new heights with each new sequence. There's a particular boat chase scene involving multiple pursuers, cars, and gunfire that stand out as the best sequence in the entire film. The plot involving a leak in Interpol and tying everything together isn't bad per say it's just not as engaging. Another unfortunate disappointment is the lack of proper use of the likes of Gary Oldman and Salma Hayek. Gary Oldman feels like a wasted resource here; playing a toned down, less interesting version of his character from "Air Force One." Hayek gives a wickedly funny take on this film; it's just her lack of screen time felt almost criminal. Though I guess it only made natural sense that the writers and director nailed down the chemistry between Jackson and Reynolds as their top priority.

Overall, "The Hitman's Bodyguard" doesn't dig up any new territory here but it sure as Hell is fun and it's clear Jackson and Reynolds are having the time of their lives making this movie as fun to watch as it probably was working together. The dialog and foul-mouthed, bickering banter are what sells this film and make you not as worried about any other negatives to nit-pick over. Granted, some can't be ignored and neither should the likes of Gary Oldman and Salma Hayek. The action, the comedy, the chemistry, it's all here, and it all works; it's not gonna break the bank or your funny bone, but it will certainly give both quite a few splits that were well worth it in this reviewer's opinion.

WHERE TO WATCH: NETFLIX | RATING: 4/5 STARS



## GLASS



Editorial credit: Featureflash Photo Agency / Shutterstock.com

## MOVIE REVIEW

Back in 2000, M. Night Shyamalan released a little-known film called "Unbreakable" starring Bruce Willis and Samuel L. Jackson; dealing with a realistically grounded portrayal of super-powered people. That film was quickly overshadowed by his previous film "The 6th Sense" and his following one "Signs." After a series of bombs, Shyamalan became an unfunny joke no one wanted any part of anymore. That all changed in 2016 when Shyamalan got back in the public's good graces with James McAvoy in "Split" AND revealed that (at the very end) "Split" is a sequel/connecting film to the same universe established in 2000's "Unbreakable."

2 years later and the final culminating film in this surprisingly connected universe comes out in the form of "Glass." With Kevin Wendell Crumb and his multiple identities still on the loose abducting women (James McAvoy), self-appointed hero David Dunn (Bruce Willis) plans to stop him before any more lives are lost. Unfortunately, both end up getting caught and taken to a special mental health facility along with previously incarcerated villain mastermind Elijah Price/Mr. Glass (Samuel L. Jackson) to have their "superhero conditions" cured by Dr. Ellie Staple (Sarah Paulson). Now questioning their superhuman abilities, David and Kevin struggle to find out who they really are while Mr. Glass forms a plan that will change everyone's lives.

This is the first time that I can proudly say that we have a Shyamalan film WITHOUT any of the weird, awkwardly annoying Shyamalan trademarks that have crippled the last handful of films he has disgracefully directed. "Glass" feels like the true story topser on a cake that has been built over the past 20 years, and if anything, age has actually improved the quality of the story right when we needed it to. The characters from "Split" and "Unbreakable" tie perfectly together in this narrative. Everyone's major events, family backstories and relatives/friends are brought together, making every character and component feel like a necessary part to a much bigger puzzle AND it allows those unfamiliar with the past films to catch a condensed recap.

People often say Christopher Nolan's "Dark Knight Trilogy" is the most grounded piece of superhero film work but I say "Glass" is far more grounded and successful in making you believe such powerful figures could exist in our world without it feeling or coming off as too fantastical. The use of a psychiatric hospital specifically designed to handle each character allowed for some amazing in-depth character growths; breaking down everyone's walls, pains, pasts and beliefs and forcing them to look at their own reality and what they are really capable of doing. The use of side/supporting characters from past films maintained a sense of familial connections.

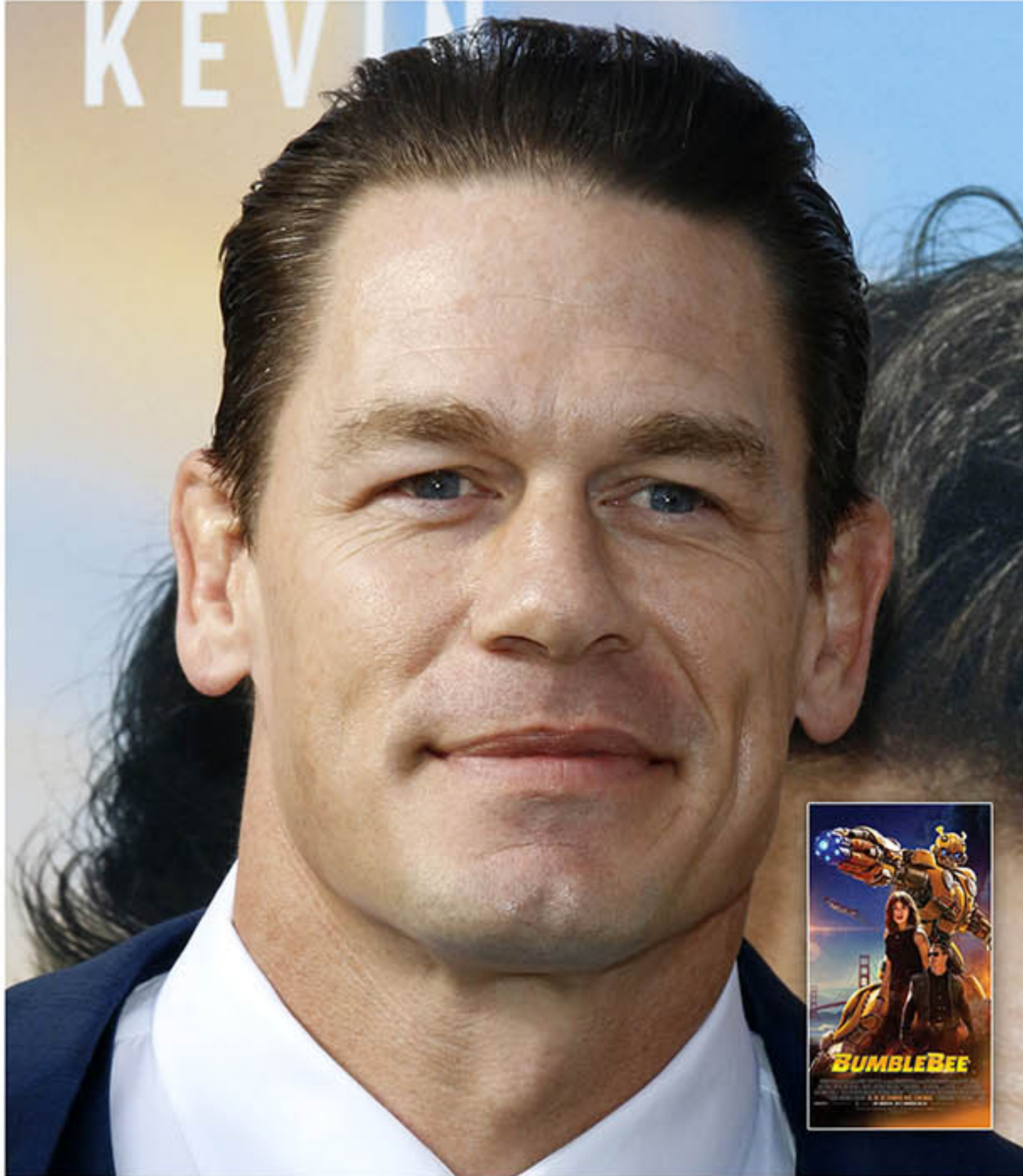
James McAvoy is just as incredibly talented here as he was in "Split." While he has to share the spotlight more, and thus; don't get to show off all his chameleon changes into multiple personalities, he makes Kevin/The Beast more human and physically involved than ever before. Personally, I felt Bruce Willis was a bit more watered down (pun intended) than in "Unbreakable" but I adored seeing him face to face with Jackson again and seeing his physical feats at the end against McAvoy was a true delight. Jackson truly stole the show this time, figuratively and literally. He settles back into his 20-year-old character like no time has passed at all. He doesn't even speak for the first hour of the film; staring ominously from his chair and making everyone in and outside of the movie wonder about his true motives.

Overall, "Glass" is the perfect finale for Shyamalan's trio of modern superhero films; managing fantasy and reality in a way that neither "Unbreakable" or "Split" could do on their own or together. Bringing together all the original actors for their characters expanded the story and tied everything together in a beautifully and compelling way. While Willis was average as opposed to great, there were no real disappointing performances here with McAvoy and Jackson leading the parade. I finally have to tip my hat to Shyamalan for breaking his cycle and creating one of his absolute best and well put together films to date and here's hoping more are on the way.

WHERE TO WATCH: HULU | RATING: 3/5 STARS



## BUMBLEBEE



Editorial credit: Tinseltown / Shutterstock.com

## MOVIE REVIEW

As a long time "Transformers" fan, even I had to walk out of the theater with my head down in shame after the disastrous "The Last Knight" premiered. So many people had carelessly bashed the franchise as a whole and this was the final universally accepted bomb that seemed to vaporize the franchise's future once and for all. All signs seem to point towards reboot junction; the only thing left on the slate before "Transformers" went to the slab was a little prequel/spinoff about everyone's favorite TF character, "Bumblebee." Directed by Travis McKnight (Kubo and the 2 strings), this was the first "Transformers" film to not be directed by Michael Bay and audiences first chance to see what a fresh take on a worn out old franchise can do.

Set in 1987, Bumblebee survives escaping from his war-ravaged planet to Earth and hides in a junkyard until he is discovered by a budding 18 year named Charlie (Hailee Stanfield) who decides to befriend him and protect him while on Earth. However, two Decepticon warriors called Shatter and Dropkick (Angela Basset and Justin Theroux) contact Earth's military spear-headed by Agent Burns (John Cena) who identify Bumblebee as an enemy spy. Now the Decepticons and Earth's army are looking and hunting Bumblebee and Charlie must try and keep her new friend safe without her

Scaling the blockbuster explosion-fest "Transformers" was known for was the wisest and most effective way to get this robot series back off its rusty feet. Long forgotten was the heart and emotional connection established with Shia Lebeouf in the first "Transformers" movie. "Bumblebee" is a strange, beautiful mix of nostalgia and modernism that manages to capture the forgotten essence the original series began with, as well as brought back the original designs and characters straight out of the 80's cartoon. The use of the 80's setting allows for some iconic music and backgrounds that perfectly fit the feel and personality of Hailee Stanfield's character and her first meeting with Bumblebee. It's like new life is being breathed into a franchise's future through a prequel.

Stanfield is a sweet, likable and endearing character who touches all the right feels without feeling too sappy or corny. Bumblebee gets plenty of time to shine along with the villains due to the small number of actual robots featured (another welcomed change). There's still action, still robots beating the crap out of each other but it feels natural with the story's flow and doesn't go overkill with the explosions. I was pleasantly surprised at John Cena's excellent performance as Agent Burns; he really nailed the character and is proving his acting chops impressively here. I only wish Jorge Lendeborg Jr. as Memo could have not only performed a bit less woodenly but was also used more effectively. He just didn't seem like he was being used as well as he could have been.

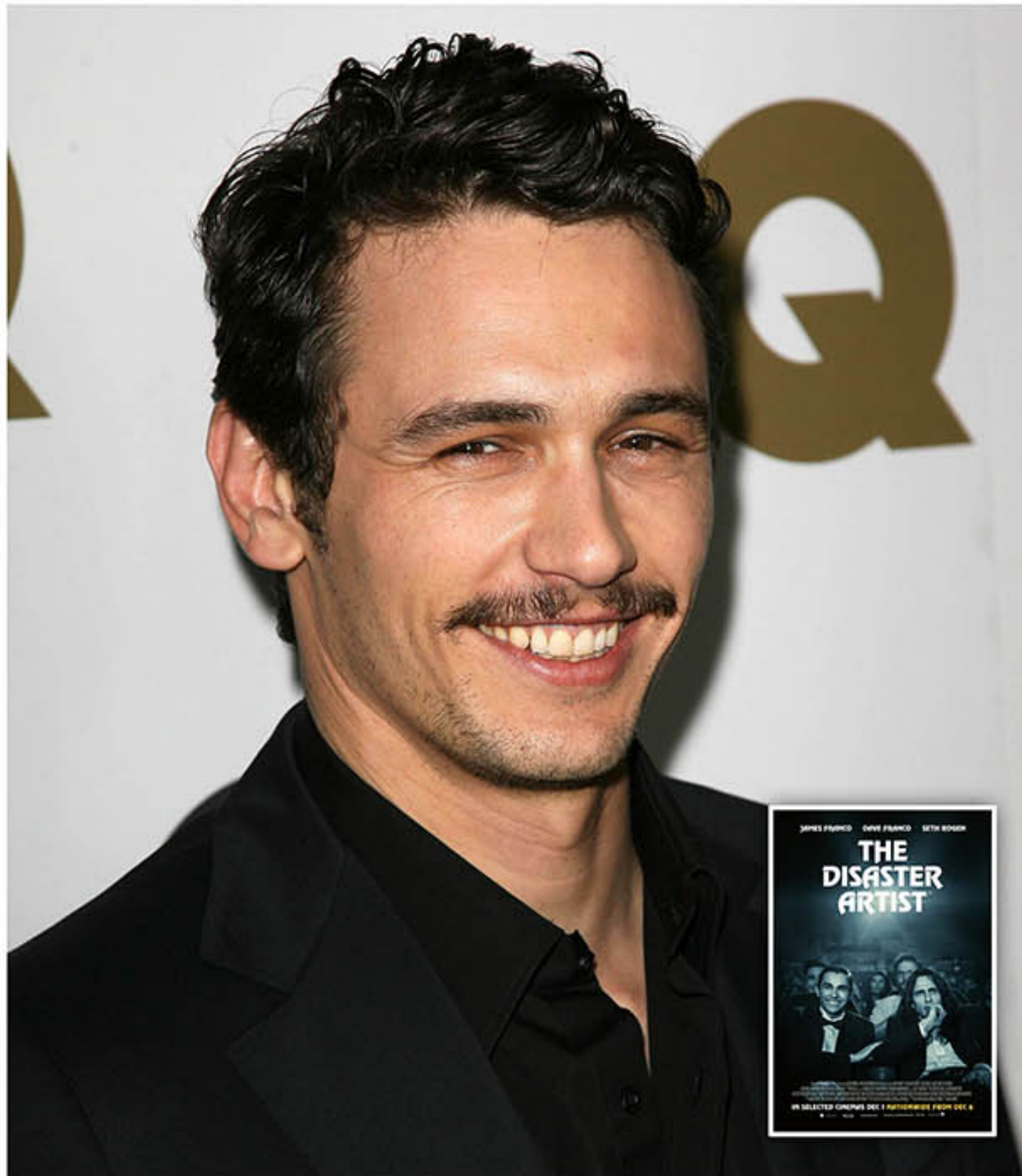
But oddly enough, one of the film's best sequences was the opening one depicting the war on Cybertron that has been discussed throughout the franchise many times but only briefly seen. We see a beautifully shot, animated and designed war sequence that captures the characters in their original forms and glory and still maintains the hard edge intensity of the combat without the animated appearances looking silly or out of place. There had been talks before of a film focusing on Cybertron and the war in animated form and after seeing just a taste of what that could look like in the opening, I would love to see that idea explored even further. The only downside with "Bumblebee" is that as a prequel, it has limited options for continuing films.

Overall, "Bumblebee" is easily the best film in the "Transformers" series. This is a fresh start with an old classic vibe that beautifully embodies all that is good with the franchise and leaves out the bad with expert storytelling, heart, emotion and just enough action to keep the fires on this series lit just a bit longer. I feel "Bumblebee" is an indication of how great this series can be again and the director and approach chosen blended together perfectly in a way that I can see more coming from this point of reference. We'll see what the future holds.

WHERE TO WATCH: AMAZON | RATING: 4/5 STARS



## DISASTER ARTIST



Editorial credit: s\_bukley / Shutterstock.com

## MOVIE REVIEW

At the very beginning of this film, there's an introductory piece where famous actors and directors like Kevin Smith and J.J. Abrams are interviewed about their thoughts and feelings about the impact Tommy Wiseau's movie "The Room" has had on them. Comedic actor Adam Scott commented that more people remember "The Room" than whatever films were nominated and won at the last awards show...and he's right. "The Room" will be discussed for decades to come because of how bafflingly bad it is, and thanks to the bizarre backstory behind the film and the man behind it; we have an unexpectedly brilliant comedic biopic that will introduce a whole new generation of moviegoers to what kind of man would make a movie like "The Room."

"Disaster Artist" is a cinematic adaptation of the book of the same name, written by actor and real-life best friend of Tommy Wiseau; Greg Sestero. Played by James Franco and Dave Franco respectively, the two wanna-be actors strike up a strange friendship and move to Los Angeles on a whim to fulfil their Hollywood dreams. Tommy puts together a movie all his own and starts filming it; despite his eccentric behaviours and complaints from his crew. The result is a movie that no one will forget and everyone will remember...but for all the wrong reasons.

I had the unexpected "pleasure" of seeing "The Room," though thankfully it was with a "Rifftrax" commentary track, which made the movie infinitely more tolerable. Making a movie about a creature as disturbingly bizarre as Tommy Wiseau doesn't sound like it'd be Oscar award material...but it turns out, it actually is. James Franco directs and stars as Tommy Wiseau, and while many write Franco off as a one-note fowl-mouthed comedic actor who just does Judd Apatow and Seth Rogen movies, this film is living proof that he is far more talented and dedicated to his craft than people realize.

Many times throughout the film, I forgot that Franco was acting as Wiseau because he looked, sounded, even walked exactly like the real Tommy Wiseau. He truly disappears into this role and manages to capture every abnormal, exaggerated line and mannerism Wiseau displayed throughout his film. This is a rare breed of film animal that manages to provide accurate, authentic details about a real person's actual life AND make it feel like it's a genuine comedy movie. I feel like this movie explains so many confusing scenes and elements of "The Room." Like when Wiseau keeps laughing at an inappropriate story and is repeatedly told it's not something his character should be laughing at, but he does it anyway and the crew just keeps the shot as is because they knew he's not going to stop doing it.

I've seen Dave Franco many times before this film and I originally felt he was just some moderately funny actor who only made it because of his brother's success. I was happy to be proven wrong as Dave Franco really steps up his game here. His naïve enthusiasm and passion for the Hollywood life feel infectiously real. The frustration over his friend's damaging decisions comes off as powerfully painful to the audience as it does to Greg. There's also a surprising assortment of fine actors discretely worked in here, like Josh Hutcherson, Zac Efron, Seth Rogen and Paul Sheer to name a few. The real focus never falls off or Wiseau or his relationship with Greg, they're always the story we were meant to follow in this movie.

The only problem this film potentially has is its limited availability of interest to others. People who have not seen "The Room" or even heard the name Tommy Wiseau will most likely not understand the appeal or desire to see a film about his life. It's not like Anthony Hopkins in "Hitchcock" where the director is already legendary; as is his work, and seeing a movie about his life could easily snatch people's attention. It's a shame too because Tommy Wiseau, "The Room" itself and its strange journey to B movie success is one of the most fascinating stories to come out of Hollywood in many years. It doesn't make sense why this film is such a surprise hit, or why Franco would want to direct and star as the man who made one of the worst movies ever made.

Be that as it may, "Disaster Artist" is brilliantly crafted, expertly directed and inspiringly well-acted to the point Franco truly disappears into his role and becomes near unrecognizable. I always think movie award shows are a pretentious, exhaustingly large waste of time and are generally rigged 90% of the time anyway, but if there ever was a movie or an actor who richly deserved those highly coveted awards; Franco and "The Disaster Artist" are the ones.

WHERE TO WATCH: NETFLIX | RATING: 3/5 STARS



## JUSTICE LEAGUE



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## MOVIE REVIEW

So, it's finally here: DC's answer to Marvel's "Avengers." Ever since DC's universe launched off its shaky foundation with its mediocre "Man of Steel," they've been scrambling to catch up with Marvel and layout their own epic crossover spectacular that (they hope) would create the same kind of box office record-breaking results that Marvel's team up produced. After five films and a dumpster fire of a success rate, we finally have "Justice League." I won't deny my flag flies pretty high for Marvel these days, but contrary to my scathing inclination, I don't want DC to fail. I'd love nothing more than to see a high quality, kick ass Justice League movie and the best versions of heroes like Batman, Flash and Wonder Woman...I'm just not sure this is it.

Picking up right after "Batman V. Superman," the world is still reeling from the death of Superman (Henry Cavill); including Batman (Ben Affleck) and Wonder Woman (Gal Gadot). When a demonic being known as Steppenwolf (Ciarán Hinds) invades Earth looking for a trio of doomsday weapons to kick start the apocalypse, the two heroes must assemble a team of super-powered loners to fight as one. With the help of Aquaman (Jason Momoa), The Flash (Ezra Miller) and Cyborg (Ray Fisher), Batman and Wonder Woman must lead a team of newly formed heroes against an unstoppable force and save humanity from total annihilation.

You know, there was a reason Marvel gave solo films to its heroes, because if you don't; you get this choke-inducing, overstuffed pizza that lacks any bite, flavor or purpose...in other words "Justice League." Were bum rushed three major superhero players in one go; reducing any character or personality development to almost nothing. Most of these characters dialog consists of an exposition, like reading a character's backstory off the box of their action figure than telling us who Cyborg or Aquaman is and why we're supposed to care about them. While the Flash's role is painfully clarified to be the comedic relief, it's counterproductive when the jokes flat out suck. Ezra Miller plays Flash as a wide-eyed, bumbling teenager who has no idea what he's doing. We hear others speak of Flash's intelligence, but based on his unfunny jokes and wide-eyed performance, he's a blatantly piss poor copy of Spider-man from "Homecoming."

Ray Fisher is so stone-cold serious and boring; he's a contender for biggest brooder next to Sad Affleck's Batman. Affleck talks as if he's on Zolaft most of the time, Gal Gadot tries her best but is clearly restrained by weak dialog and Momoa acts like a water-bound biker "bro." The acting is a travesty that everyone has been sucked into. Amy Adams, J.K. Simmons, Jeremy Irons and so many talented actors get reduced to non-existent roles. It's no wonder everyone phoned it in as they knew their characters weren't written meaningfully to warrant any effort. The climax is an assault of disgustingly bad CGI. It's like a tidal wave of bad green screen effects. Everything looks fake and cheaply put together, same goes for Cyborg's terrible body designs and the most forgettable villain since Wonder Woman's Ares.

Steppenwolf looks like a disgruntled piece of clay that was half-assedly sculpted into humanoid form. His dialog, motivations, personality, everything is atrociously bad. The minute he's not onscreen, you forget he's the big bad in this film or that he even showed up at all. Many critics have ignorantly blasted Marvel movies for claiming they produce lackluster villains. Even the most poorly received Marvel movie has produced villains better than "Justice League" has. Worst of all, this doesn't feel like this was a team up worth waiting for. We barely know or like these characters, and it's hard to do that when they lack the most crucial element for a team AND for a team-up movie: chemistry. None of these heroes has one scrap of chemistry among them!

They make painfully unfunny jokes; tease hollowed out attempts at development or romance and expects the magnitude of this team up of superheroes to impress you enough that you don't pay attention to all of the awful mistakes this movie has made. The thing is, this is these are the same mistakes that DC has been making since the beginning. "Justice League" is only a slightly more tolerable DC movie and that's not what we should be seeing at this juncture. This should be the home run that makes everyone's teamwork and effort feel relevant, and unsurprisingly; it's not. DC's cinematic universe is a dead horse, and they need to stop beating it. To quote an infinitely superior DC movie (Batman Begins) with a far better Batman (Christian Bale): Please go. Stop smiling. It's not a joke. Please leave. The party's over. Get out.

WHERE TO WATCH: NETFLIX | RATING: 3/5 STARS



## THE PUNISHER



Editorial credit: DFree / Shutterstock.com

## TV REVIEW

When the second season of Netflix's "Daredevil" series premiered, it introduced a standout new character that quickly captured people's attention and interest right off the bat: Frank Castle aka The Punisher. The character has been poorly represented in 3 different films over the years. So much so that the character's rights inevitably went back to Marvel Studios so they can properly bring the character to life: albeit on the small screen this time. This new take on The Punisher was so well received, the character got his own spinoff series and that is the version of "The Punisher" I'll be looking deeper into with today's review.

After the events of "Daredevil" Season 2, The Punisher, an ex-marine turned gun toting vigilante (Jon Bernthal); is believed to be dead and is free to return to a quieter, more miserable life after finishing off the last of the people responsible for murdering his family. However, after being discovered by a mysterious hacker genius known as Microchip (Ebon Moss-Bachrach), he finds out not everyone believes he is dead. A strange conspiracy is corrupting the U.S. military and leading Frank to new clues and new foes regarding the mystery behind his family's brutal murder. Now he must become the Punisher once more and punish those who prey on the innocent.

When I first heard about this series, I was really intrigued to see where they would go with this character; especially considering his brutal methods are perfect for Netflix's darker take on these comic book characters. Unfortunately, those expecting to see some quality shoot 'em up violence will be sorely mistaken, as will those expecting to see the vigilante known as "The Punisher." The show's primary problem is inescapably difficult to deal with. Since Castle thinks everyone who killed his family is dead, he pretty much gives up being The Punisher and doesn't start acting like his "vigilante self" until towards the very end of the series. Instead of seeing character iconic shoot outs and blood soaked vengeance, we see an uninteresting military conspiracy mystery and Jon Bernthal reliving the same boring flashbacks and routines episode after episode.

There's much time spent building on this conspiracy, planting all these obvious leads and clues and characters that clearly point to something bigger taking place...it's just not that big or as interesting as the story makes it seem. It's like we caught up to the Punisher after he's retired and put his violent ways behind him, so like the worst possible time you could start a new series on a character. There are some violent pieces here and there but it's few and far between. Bernthal still makes the character a role to be reckoned with, switching from dark, to dramatic to heartfelt when need be; he's a perfect fit for the role. Ebon Moss-Bachrach is a great addition as Micro. His scenes with Bernthal were some of my favorite moments and their involvement was about the only enjoyable part to the conspiracy plot.

Many people were concerned that the increasing number of violent shootings in the U.S. would affect the release of this series due to its heavy use of gun violence. The series release date was delayed and the creators said no part of the content was changed as a result, though if you had told me some of the content WAS change; I could see how they could say that after seeing the series. "The Punisher" is known for his extreme interrogation techniques and constant use of deadly force. His "take no prisoners" attitude is the trademark trait of the character, but it just doesn't feel like that part carried over properly. This feels like a cop drama you'd find on NBC or TNT that just happens to have a vigilante who at the very END of the season turns into the Punisher.

Overall, "The Punisher" may not be as bad as "Iron Fist" (it's worst reviewed series), but it definitely makes it hard not to be seen in an equally negative light. Bernthal is a great fit for the role and I wouldn't want anyone else to play him, but I DO wish everyone else involved on this series would have outsourced to someone better at executing proper drama, storytelling, and most importantly; accuracy to the character. Even the poorly received movies included some wacky, absurd characters and weapons that exist in the Punisher universe. This Netflix series is too realistic in the worst way possible, and swaps out the character's gun running methods for a lackluster conspiracy plot that feels and reads as broken and poorly as the titular character.

WHERE TO WATCH: NETFLIX | RATING: 3/5 STARS



## WONDER WOMAN



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## MOVIE REVIEW

At her core, Wonder Woman has always represented so much of the feminist beliefs right from the time when her stories were firstly heard. Created in 1941, William Moulton Marston portrayed her as a kindhearted but audacious superhero who offers what no other person can give. She is basically presented as an imaginative power that favours the absolute desires of most women.

In comic adaptations, women can be so self-assured, funny, and even tough. Yet they rarely made any significant strides orchestrating their own destiny. In the film industry as a whole, hardly ever has there been any room for the fantasies of women in such a way as this. Despite the seeming difficulty of accommodating female characters into the mannish genres of superhero films, the relatively outmoded Israeli actress and model Gal Gadot is still able to hold her own and at the same time present herself as yet an uncommon superhuman character.

Even in times of social challenging situation, Wonder Woman tries so well to compose herself calmly with self-assured dignity. Whether charging into a nest of German sniper fire or bantering with Pine, she tries not to lose out on exhibiting the highly desired enthusiasm. Despite being so naïve, Gal Gadot (Diana) who is clearly the heroine of the story seems always poised to set an example for others to emulate. As part of her interest in saving people, she never hesitates to act selflessly and bravely at any point in time.

As part of her efforts to rise up to the challenge of playing Diana, Gadot has not only come up to showcase yet another pretty face but has also shown a sweet sense of naivety, as well as a ridiculously strong persona. In her quest to defeat the warmongering Ares, Wonder Woman explains how hyper-focus she is in saving humanity unlike other of her male DC fellows (Batman, Superman, and the rest) who were more or less broodingly conflicted about their roles or responsibilities in the universe.

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WHERE TO WATCH: NETFLIX | RATING: 5/5 STARS



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