

Movie Review: Fantastic Four

Written by {ga=mitch}

Saturday, June 23 2007 7:00 PM -

Normally Mitch digs the superhero film genre. However, he was not a big fan of the first Fantastic Four film. But based almost solely on the fact Jessica Alba stars in it, we sent Mitch back out to the theaters to review the latest Fantastic Four movie for us, "Rise of the Silver Surfer". Was it brilliant? More garbage? Worth the \$8 at the theater? The \$4 when it comes out on DVD? Mitch delivers the 411.



Two years ago, another superhero movie came out from Marvel, featuring one of the long time staples of the Marvel franchise; the Fantastic Four. After the wild success of the other two Marvel linchpins, Spider-Man and the X-Men, I was expecting nothing less than brilliance.

And I got garbage, as the first movie was probably the worst superhero movie since "Daredevil", and might even have been worse than Ben Affleck's red-leather clad moper. Stilted dialog, zero chemistry between the characters, mediocre special effects, and a plot line that was both boring and totally unfaithful to the original story of the Fantastic Four.

Knowing that the obligatory back-story regarding how they got their powers would be out of the way, and intrigued by some pretty decent looking trailers, I actually held out high hopes that they would get it right this time as the second movie in

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the franchise focused on one of the most interesting characters in the Marvel Universe; the Silver Surfer.

But instead, I got garbage again.

I have now watched two movies this summer that clock in at 90 minutes or less that nearly put me to sleep in the first hour. On the positive side, the last 30 minutes of this movie are pretty good, just in terms of action and special effects, as opposed to the grind-to-a-halt final half hour of "Shrek the Third". The first 45 minutes of this movie, however, could have been condensed into 10 minutes, and no one would have been the worse for it.

What we get during that first part is more of the same from the last movie. The four heroes are still more interested in bickering and whining than anything else. Reed Richards is still a clueless, boring nerd. Susan Storm continually pouts about her lack of privacy (kind of dumb for a woman who can turn invisible). Ben Grimm is still uncomfortable in his rock-suit skin, while Johnny Storm still behaves like a spoiled 17 year old. Add to it Reed and Susan's upcoming celebrity super-event wedding and they are just too damn busy to pay attention to an anomaly that will end up destroying the world if not stopped.

They finally do figure it out when, in true comic-book stupid style, the Silver Surfer flies through Manhattan right during the middle of their wedding ceremony, fouling everything up, including Johnny's expensive new tux. The good part of it is that we get about five minutes worth of incredible special effects as the Human Torch chases the Surfer down the East Coast. Johnny's close encounter of the surf's up kind leads to a convenient (eventually) genetic quirk where he swaps power when he touches another superhero.

I guess the producers were trying to leverage off from "Spider-Man 3", feeling the

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need to give the quartet three different adversaries to deal with. Not only are they having to figure out a way to stop the Surfer, they also have to deal with an egotistical general who doesn't trust them (Andre Braugher, even more wasted than he was last summer in the awful "Poseidon") and an old friend from the last movie, Dr. Doom (Julian McMahon), who may be less metallic than he was at the end of the first film, but he's still about as two dimensional as the comic pages he came from. Both Dr. Doom and General Hager seem to be much more interested in their tiffs with the Fantastic Four than they are with the fact that wherever the Surfer appears in the galaxy, the planet dies eight days later.

Long time fans of the comics know that the Surfer is a herald of the planet eating Galactus, one of the strangest creations from the mind of Stan Lee (who, by the way, has another lame cameo in this movie...one that borders on stick-a-finger-down-your-throat pandering). Galactus has always been of human form, albeit a 250 foot tall human. Here though, he's inexplicably pretty much a planet sized version of the Smoke Monster that you see on the television show "Lost".

You may be asking yourself if I thought there was anything good in the movie, and I will say that there were a few, enough to avoid the dreaded "Spergon Wynn" rating. As bad as the chemistry was between Ioan Gruffudd as Mr. Fantastic and Jessica Alba as the Invisible Woman, the give and take between Michael Chiklis as The Thing and Chris Evans as the Human Torch was excellent. I expected nothing less from Chiklis, who is far and away the best actor in this franchise, but Evans surprised me. Not only was his little-brother-as-a-loving-pest interactions with Chiklis much more believable, he also demonstrated some true acting ability in showing Johnny's insecurity and frustrations, other than just the out of control ego.

And as stated, the final battle scenes, while not exactly stimulating intellectually, are visually eye-popping. As good as anything seen from X-Men or Spider-Man.

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It's just a shame that the potential of a great series has once again been squandered by an incompetent director and writing staff, compounded with very questionable casting. Guffudd is a good actor in period pieces, but he is just awful in this role. And as beautiful as Jessica Alba is, she is just totally wrong for the part of the uber-WASP Susan. Whoever the idiot was who decided to try to make her look more like the comic-book version by sticking a pair of blue contacts on the exoticly dark complexioned Alba needed to be fired, it was even more phony looking than her bleached blonde hair.

I honestly had more fun watching "Ghost Rider". At least in that one I expected camp and stupidity, which is what I got...but at least it was entertaining camp and stupidity, aided by great wink-at-the-camera, over the top performances from Nicolas Cage and Sam Elliot.

This one goes down in the same category as last year's Super Hero disappointment, "X-Men: The Last Stand". A muddled mess with flashes of special effects enjoyment.

My Rating: Tim Couch (1 ½ footballs).

Review Key:

Otto Graham: Over 4 Footballs. HOF quality movie

Bernie Kosar: 4 Footballs. Excellent

Brian Sipe: 3 ½ Footballs. Very Good

Frank Ryan: 3 Footballs. Good, solid film.

Bill Nelsen: 2 ½ Footballs. OK. Worth seeing at the theater.

Kelly Holcomb: 2 Footballs. Disappointingly inconsistent but some bright spots.

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Rent it on DVD.

Tim Couch: 1 ½ Footballs. Poor. Had potential, but lack of support led to an overall stinker.

Jeff Garcia: 1 Football. Horrible. All hype; no performance.

Mike Phipps: ½ Football. “We gave away Paul Warfield for THIS?” level of suck

Spergeon Wynn: No Footballs. UberSuckitude personified.