

Blu-Ray Review: Marvelous Release For Mediocre 'Sherlock Holmes'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on April 1, 2010 - 3:06pm

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CHICAGO – Guy Ritchie's wildly successful "Sherlock Holmes" looks and sounds amazing on Blu-ray but the flaws of the blockbuster film remain. Viewed purely as escapist entertainment, "Sherlock" is a reasonably tasty piece of popcorn and the technical treatment and bonus material that accompany the film are unimpeachable but there's still something not quite right about Robert Downey Jr. and Jude Law's take on Holmes and Watson.



Blu-Ray Rating: **4.0/5.0**

Ritchie himself verbalizes one of my biggest problems with "Sherlock Holmes" in the excellent special feature "Maximum Movie Mode," which I'll get into more later, when he says "He was the first action hero." Um, no. As a fan of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's work, I don't think any hardcore fan of the legendary character would have called him an action hero and turning him into one doesn't quite fit.



Sherlock Holmes was released on DVD and Blu-ray on March 30th, 2010.

Photo credit: Warner Brothers Home Video

"Sherlock Holmes" is a case of a film that isn't bad but arguably *should* have been better. A decent action movie that goes down like fast food is usually more than enough when it comes to a rental on a Saturday night, but generations of Holmes fans and those who have come to expect more from actors this talented may be disappointed that it's not closer to filet mignon.





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Photo credit: Warner Brothers Home Video

Despite what Ritchie may think, Sherlock Holmes (Downey Jr.) has been wildly re-imagined as a reclusive action man – more brawn than brain. Of course, the latter is still there, but this Holmes uses his intellect to figure out the most effective way to disarm and disable his enemies instead of just putting the pieces together of his latest mystery.

The new Holmes may be an intellectual, but he's also an ass-kicking intellectual. Of course, that's a perfect fit for Mr. Downey (and the part seems clearly tailor made for his skills) and the way the man otherwise known as Mr. Tony Stark puts his own stamp on such a well-known character is the most interesting thing about this version of Sherlock Holmes.

Jude Law is typically strong as Watson, but, sadly, the praise for the supporting cast ends there. "Sherlock Holmes" is the kind of film with recognizable faces that seem perfectly cast but who then proceed to do almost nothing beyond having been given the job. Eddie Marsan as a Scotland Yard captain, Mark Strong as a nefarious super-villain, Rachel McAdams as the love interest, Kelly Reilly as Watson's fiancée – all perfectly cast, all completely wasted, as if Ritchie and his team were overly conscious of even the potential of stealing a scene from Holmes himself.

To the film's credit, it is a technical marvel, something even more noticeable in HD than it was in theaters. The film starts off at a breakneck pace and rarely lets up with a gorgeous video and audio transfer amplified by Hans Zimmer's Oscar-nominated score booming from your surround sound speakers. The patchwork script (credited to three separate writers) has clearly been through the machine a few too many times with its mish-mash of styles and tones that never quite comes together and the way it completely wastes the characters assigned to McAdams and Strong. I have a feeling the inevitable sequel will be a much stronger film.



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Photo credit: Warner Brothers Home Video

The breakneck speed of the plot and what Downey and Law bring to the film has a smoke-and-mirrors way of making "Sherlock Holmes" feel reasonably enjoyable for its running time — a sensation notably amplified by the sensory overload of Blu-ray. It only falls apart upon something Holmes himself was known for — inspection.

Ritchie himself inspects the film in a great featurette called "Maximum Movie Mode". The director stands on a stage, almost as if he's giving a lecture about his movie, with two screens behind him. On one runs the film and behind-the-scenes footage about that particular scene runs on the other while Ritchie details his process, sometimes pausing the film to do so. It's an expertly produced bonus feature that offers true insight into the way movies like "Sherlock Holmes" gets made; one of the best special features of the year to date.

Other special features include "Sherlock Holmes: Reinvented" and a series of other behind-the-scenes featurettes that share material with "Maximum Movie Mode," an inclusion I hope makes its way to future WB Blu-ray releases.

(Note: The 4.0/5.0 rating is for the excellent Blu-ray, taking into account its superior technical treatment and special features. The film itself would only merit a 3.0/5.0.)

'Sherlock Holmes' is released by Warner Brothers Home Video and stars Robert Downey Jr., Jude Law, Rachel McAdams, Mark Strong, Kelly Reilly, and Eddie Marsan. It was written by Michael Robert Johnson and Anthony Peckham and Simon Kinberg and directed by Guy Ritchie. It was released on Blu-ray and DVD on March 30th, 2010. It is rated PG-13.



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