

Blu-ray Review: Kids Will Like ‘Real Steel,’ Adults May Be Bored

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on February 1, 2012 - 5:47pm

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CHICAGO – For pre-teen boys, a movie about fighting robots probably can't possibly be too long. For their parents, guardians, or babysitters, the fact that “Real Steel” is a ridiculously-overlong 127 minutes is worth noting. The film plays like gangbusters to eight-to-twelve year old boys (and the PG-13 rating is silly given the general lack of non-robot violence) but wears out its welcome for pretty much everyone else. There are things to like here, but not enough to overcome its bloated personality.



Blu-ray Rating: **2.5/5.0**

Hugh Jackman is an engaging lead as Charlie Kenton, a washed-up fighter looking for his one last chance in the ring. In fact, “Real Steel” hits most of the same beats as your standard boxing movie if you replaced the fighters with giant rock-‘em, sock-‘em robots. In the very near future, man’s lust for blood will make boxing and MMA not extreme enough, causing the need for even-more-extreme fighting in the form of giant, Transformers-esque robots going metal mano-a-mano. Kenton is at the bottom of his career rung when we meet him, even losing robot fights to giant bulls. He owes some sleazy types some gambling debts and appears to have no one to support him (except for the lovely Evangeline Lilly in a relatively thankless role).

Enter an inspirational urchin in the form of Max (Dakota Goyo), Charlie’s long-lost son. After Max’s mother dies, his aunt (Hope Davis) wants to take him as her own but her wealthy husband wants to take a summer vacation first. For a healthy fee, Charlie agrees to hang out with his son for the summer and then turn him over to his aunt. Of course, this is the summer when everything changes. Charlie and Max turn out to be just what the other one needs and the two build and train a robot that can hold his own with the best robot fighters in the world.



Real Steel

Photo credit: Touchstone

The robot battles in “Real Steel” are pretty impressive on a technical level (earning the film an Oscar nomination for Best Visual Effects) but not significantly enough to make up for the weak dialogue and predictable storytelling. All through “Real Steel,” I kept having the same thought — the critic in me doesn’t really enjoy this but this movie was made for the 9-year-old boy in me and he’s totally down. In other words, it’s a movie that works for its target audience, that just happens to not be me. Having said that, there could have been a version of this film that appealed to age 8, 18, and 38 with smarter dialogue and more interesting storytelling (and about 20 minutes cut at some point in the process). “Real Steel” certainly isn’t a bad movie, especially when one considers its demo, but it should have and could have been better.

The Blu-ray is also a bit disappointing. The video and audio are pretty standard, but they both could have been better. The special features are pretty meh, especially for those people who don’t have an iPad (to access the “Second Screen” app). How ironic that a movie about a technologically-driven future that divides the have and the have nots comes with a Blu-ray feature that can only be accessed by the former.

Synopsis:

Enter the not-so-distant future where boxing has gone high-tech — 2000-pound, 8-foot tall steel robots have taken over the ring. Starring Hugh Jackman as Charlie Kenton, a washed-up fighter turned small-time promoter, Real Steel is a riveting, white-knuckle action ride that will leave you cheering. When Charlie hits rock bottom, he reluctantly teams up with his estranged son Max (Dakota Goyo) to build and train a championship contender. As the stakes in the thrill-packed arena are raised, Charlie and Max, against all odds, get one last shot at a comeback. Visually stunning and complete with knockout bonus material, Real Steel is a pulse-pounding, inspirational adventure filled with heart and soul.

Special Features:

- o Deleted & Extended Scenes - With Introductions by Director Shawn Levy
- o Countdown To The Fight: The Charlie Kenton Story
- o Real Steel Second Screen
- o Sugar Ray: Leonard Cornerman's Champ
- o Bloopers
- o Making Of Metal Valley
- o Building The Bots
- o Audio Commentary With Director Shawn Levy

“Real Steel” stars Hugh Jackman, Dakota Goyo, Evangeline Lilly, Anthony Mackie, and Hope Davis. It was directed by Shawn Levy. It was released on Blu-ray and DVD on January 24th, 2012.



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By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [14]

Content Director

HollywoodChicago.com

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