

Film Review: Journey to ‘Elysium’ Lacks Sci-fi Smarts

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on August 5, 2013 - 3:36pm

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CHICAGO – “Elysium” is a blunt instrument. It contains all the subtlety of franchise-killer “Terminator: Salvation.” Where Neill Blomkamp’s “District 9” was surprisingly sleek and refined given its low budget and rookie creator, the follow-up proves that more is very often less.



Rating: **2.5/5.0**

With broad caricatures everywhere but the center of the film, a tone that teeters between satire and sci-fi, awkwardly staged action scenes, and more emotional manipulation than a Red Cross commercial, “Elysium” is one of the biggest disappointments of the year. Matt Damon grounds the piece in yet-another solid performance and Sharlto Copley has some fun as the over-the-top bad guy. Everything else ranges from mediocre (the script) to truly awful (the worst performance by an Oscar winner you’ll see all year).



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Blomkamp’s script reimagines the growing chasm between the haves and the have-nots as something that will involve space travel next century. It is 2154. Earth is essentially one planetary slum with little health care, no road or building care, and such extreme poverty that Max (Matt Damon) is ridiculed by locals for even having a job in the first place. Why bother? There’s nothing to spend the money he’ll earn on at the end of the day. Robots have replaced human police and parole officers, crime is rampant, and those who do try to escape this literal Hell on Earth are usually unsuccessful.

Those with enough power and money have moved to Elysium, a massive country in the sky, protected with an iron fist by Secretary of Defense Delacourt (Jodie Foster). On Elysium, no one ever gets sick because science has developed Med Bays that can heal any wounds. Sick people on Earth try to escape to Elysium with the help of a rebel named Spider (Wagner Moura). They usually fail.



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“Elysium” stars Matt Damon, Jodie Foster, Sharlto Compley, Alice Braga, Diego Luna, Wagner Moura, and William Fichtner. It was written and directed by Neill Blomkamp. It opens on August 9, 2013.



Elysium

Photo credit: Sony Pictures

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