

Wildly Entertaining ‘Kick-Ass’ Lives Up to Its Title

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on April 16, 2010 - 8:07pm

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CHICAGO – With a half dozen superhero movies every year that feel as if they were created by a Hollywood blockbuster machine, it’s so refreshing to see one with its own distinct, subversive personality like Matthew Vaughn’s “Kick-Ass”. Starring Aaron Johnson (“The Greatest”), Chloe Grace Moretz (“(500) Days of Summer”), Christopher Mintz-Plasse (“Superbad”), and Nicolas Cage, the adaptation of Mark Millar’s (“Wanted”) comic book is one of the most purely entertaining films of the year to date.

Gleefully dissecting the hero worship that turns men in tights into cultural icons in the first place while also becoming a great action movie in its own right, “Kick-Ass” starts as an awkward teen comedy not unlike “Superbad” meets “Spider-Man” but becomes an action-adventure classic that simply demolishes so many of the recent Marvel Universe movies that dare call themselves heroic.



Teaser Art
Photo credit: Lionsgate

“Kick-Ass” is not for everyone. Many of the early reviews, including a pan from Roger Ebert, have noted the film’s controversial elements, including a pre-teen heroine who kills many grown men and talks like a trucker. It’s impossible and naive to say someone “shouldn’t be offended”. They were and I get that and if you question your willingness to suspend disbelief not unlike the way you did at the violence in “Kill Bill” or “Battle Royale,” then this movie is not for you. If you can get into the film’s alternate universe, it delivers for your demographic on every single level.

The zero-to-hero of this story is Dave Lizewski (Johnson), an awkward-but-sweet young man who can’t even talk to his high school crush (Lyndsy Fonseca) and spends most of his time in the local comic book store with his two wisecracking buddies (Evan Peters & Clark Duke). Poor Dave gets beat up a lot and is tired of the crime taking over his neighborhood. Unlike most people, he refuses to keep looking the other way and he orders a costume, trains, and starts kicking ass. He will be the first “real” superhero.

He will not be the only one. Chris D’Amico (Mintz-Plasse) is the overprotected child of a notorious mobster named Frank (the always-great Mark Strong). D’Amico’s arc is unclear almost throughout the film and I would never spoil it here but Vaughn and his team brilliantly play with comic fan awareness that the offspring of supervillains don’t always follow in their parent’s footsteps while keeping us wondering what kind of role the kid who will be known as Red Mist will play.



Kick-Ass and Hit Girl.

Photo credit: Dan Smith/Lionsgate

The movie-stealer is Hit Girl, a sweet child who also goes by the name Mindy and is a killing machine. She has been thoroughly damaged and warped by her father (Nicolas Cage), a chunkier version of Batman known as Big Daddy. What I think some critics are missing is that we're not supposed to think Big Daddy belongs in the parenthood hall of fame. He warped his daughter for his own complex revenge and, in many ways, he's a villain of the piece as much as Frank D'Amico. On the other hand, Hit Girl is an incredibly entertaining fictional creation that will be the make-or-break factor for most viewers. When she first breaks through, killing a whole room of bad guys, the chasm between superhero fiction and realism is clear enough to this viewer to not get offended but it may not be for all.

Kick-Ass, Hit Girl, Red Mist, and Big Daddy all have their own stories that come together at various points, building toward one of the most amazing climaxes in years.

Narrated by Dave/Kick-Ass, the first two acts of Vaughn and Jane Goldman's script brilliantly dissect the popularity of the modern superhero and what comes with it but the glory is that the film becomes a traditional origin story on its own by the end. Dave spends time trying to deflate hero cliches like dead parents or similarly traumatic events but all of the major characters will have serious parent issues by film's end.

Most superhero movies feature actors giving what can barely be called "performances" and the perfectly cast and directed ensemble of "Kick-Ass" is a major plus. Moretz steals most of the pic but Johnson and Mintz-Plasse are better than you first think in less flashy roles. Strong is typically great and Cage chews scenery with the best of them. Recognizable faces in the supporting cast include Michael Rispoli, Xander Berkeley, and Jason Flemyng. They all deliver.

Love it, hate it; I can't imagine there will be many viewers in between on "Kick-Ass" and there's something to be said about a movie, especially a superhero one, that provokes that much heated conversation. Above all else, "Kick-Ass" doesn't go away easily. It's in your face with its distinct, unusual, entertaining personality and it demands that you form an opinion about it. For me, it lives up to its name.



[Check out our 23-image slideshow from "Kick-Ass".](#) [12]



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'Kick-Ass' stars Aaron Johnson, Chloe Grace Moretz, Christopher Mintz-Plasse, Mark Strong, Nicolas Cage, Lyndsy Fonseca, Evan Peters, and Clark Duke. It was written by Matthew Vaughn & Jane Goldman and directed by Vaughn. It opened on April 16th, 2010. It is rated R.



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