

Despite Offering Tantalizing Possibilities, ‘Jumper’ Weakened By Formulaic Clichés

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CHICAGO – As a distinct premise, “Jumper” offers tantalizing possibilities. The ability to transport yourself from one location to another with simple mind control is a cool rule of the world. While the film speaks to some of the far-reaching potential of the power, it also follows story formulas that weaken it.



Hayden Christensen in “Jumper”.
Photo credit: IMDb

David Rice (Hayden Christensen) is a high school geek in Ann Arbor, Mich. who desires a lovely lass named Millie (Rachel Bilson).

When a present he gives her is thrown by a bully onto a frozen river, David falls through the ice while retrieving it – certain to drown.

It's then that he discovers he's a “jumper” and has the ability in organic form to transport himself to another location just by thinking about it.

In the case of the river, for example, he jumps to an Ann Arbor public library. This begins his journey of using the power for his own gain (bank robbery) and essentially to live the good life in various famous locations throughout the world.



Samuel L. Jackson in “Jumper”.
Photo credit: IMDb

As the film likes to remind us, of course, there are always consequences.

Jumpers have been chased and eliminated by paladins for centuries and David's main pursuer is Roland Cox (Samuel L. Jackson). He also finds out there are other jumpers – including Griffin (Jamie Bell) – who becomes a reluctant ally.

Still, David chooses to risk his power for the love of Millie, which exposes him both to potential capture by the paladins and the secrets of his past.

The story earns credit for immediately showing the bling-bling advantage of being able to go anywhere. Who wouldn’t want to do that?

The 15-year-old David makes the traceable mistake of hitting banks while also manages to live large up to the age of 26 by surfing in New Zealand, sunbathing on the top of a Sphinx and picking up a comely gal in London.



There are several sequences where the jumping is simply spectacular especially when David is being pursued by the paladins and he’s going from location to location with pulse-pounding intensity. It’s in the unnecessary formulas, though, where the flaws lie.

By living his life virtually free of responsibility, why does Millie – as part of a tired romance cliché – become the single object of David’s desire?

It just didn’t fit with his rock ‘n roll jumper lifestyle. Christensen projects boredom as a jumper while Bell has a more appropriate paranoia.

Jackson as the main paladin is in full “Snakes on a Plane” mode as in “I’m sick of all these MF-ing jumpers on the MF-ing Earth”. It seems to have become his calling.

There is promise in the series (I smell sequel) if only they explore the cooler and more heroic possibilities of the jumpers and a more interesting rivalry or outright war against the paladins. I also have to wonder: Why in the name of movie soundtracks didn’t they use Van Halen’s “Jump”?

“Jumper” opened on Feb. 14, 2008.

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