

## ‘The Green Hornet’ Overly Limelights a Cavalier But Thrilling Seth Rogen

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Rating: **2.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – “The Green Hornet,” which could have been titled “The Seth Rogen Show,” is an uneven mix between a stroke of comic book genius and a self-righteous attempt at being both comedy and drama. The untidy story is wrapped inside a messy box that’s a portion of what it successfully is and what it should have been.

Despite some common comic book traps such as a son with daddy issues, the collaboration of director Michel Gondry (“Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind,” “Be Kind Rewind” and “The Science of Sleep”) with Seth Rogen (the star, writer and executive producer of “Pineapple Express” and “Superbad” and the star and producer of “The 40-Year-Old Virgin,” “Knocked Up” and “Funny People”) partially pays off. Strong emphasis is placed on the *partially*.



Jay Chou (left) and Seth Rogen (right) in “The Green Hornet”.

Image credit: Jaimie Trueblood



This film serves as a one-man show for Seth Rogen while Jay Chou as Kato – the real superhero – is constantly underappreciated. Just starring in a film hasn’t been enough lately for Rogen. He’s often involved in the writing and producing of his own leading-role films, too.

We get the clear sense that Rogen wrote, executive produced and starred in “The Green Hornet,” but too much so. This time, the lazy and typically fun-loving, pothead Rogen inherits a media empire from his late dad that he doesn’t want. “The Green Hornet” stars Rogen, Jay Chou, Cameron Diaz, Tom Wilkinson and Christoph Waltz.

Rogen’s character is smart enough to spot talent in Jay Chou as Kato. Kato was his dad’s mechanic and his master coffee maker. The transformation of a coffee maker turned superhero is the most comical twist in this film. That said, Rogen’s decision to make his own Britt Reid character The Green Hornet as opposed to the rightfully talented Kato lacks honesty and authenticity.



Christoph Waltz in “The Green Hornet”.

*Image credit: Jaimie Trueblood*

Keeping Kato – who doesn’t even have a sidekick name – invisibly in the shadows while he does all the heavy lifting not only makes you feel sorry for him but makes you annoyed at Rogen. And Rogen’s decision to unrealistically develop some of Kato’s “The Matrix”-esque ability to slow things down and kick ass with laser precision merely comes off as arrogant.

Christoph Waltz, who’s coming off his recently haunting and Oscar-nominated performance as a Nazi in Quentin Tarantino’s “Inglourious Basterds,” is an important but awkward casting decision. Waltz again uses his straight-face talent in “The Green Hornet”. The difference between his performance in “Inglourious Basterds” and “The Green Hornet” is the latter scripts him with deadpan comedy.

While he’s supposed to be a scary bad guy in both, “The Green Hornet” is more interested in the comedy of his self-important perceptions (i.e. how cool his clothes are and how scary his name sounds through the ridiculous transformation from Chudnofsky to “Bloodnofsky”) than his ability to be menacing. “The Green Hornet” had enough comedy in Rogen’s overuse of screen time alone that Waltz would have been better served purely in a dramatic role instead of trying to go for a dramedy.



Seth Rogen (right) in “The Green Hornet”.

*Image credit: Jaimie Trueblood*

By contrast, his “Inglourious Basterds” role is truly terrifying. In “The Green Hornet,” the overly insecure and emotional Waltz feels like he’s constantly about to cry. While the dichotomy of this character is sometimes humorous, it ultimately yields a weaker antagonist than we need in superhero flicks.

What would have been an interesting twist and sign of fascinating humility is if Rogen’s character in the middle of the film would denounce himself as The Green Hornet, justifiably give that spotlight to Kato and then create himself as something more true to his actual form. Rogen’s character should have evolved with humility and authenticity by relinquishing his bogus stranglehold as The Green Hornet and becoming The Guy Who Smokes a Fat Blunt Better Than You But Only Kicks Ass Like Your Great Grandma.

Then you’d feel vindication for Kato getting his just desserts with the simultaneous mad props of respect for the overly haughty Rogen who’d be admitting he’s not the real star. But alas, that’s not how this story goes, and the big name takes the greedy spotlight as usual. And the casting decision of Cameron Diaz in a role that didn’t even need to be there utilized her in such a way where she could have been anyone else.





Cameron Diaz (left) and Seth Rogen (right) in “The Green Hornet”.

*Image credit: Jaimie Trueblood*

Like Kato truly was the real superhero but played the role in the closet, Diaz’s character as Lenore Case played the clandestine brains of the whole operation. In the above-mentioned scenario where Rogen would surrender his sham as The Green Hornet and Kato would actually emerge as such, elevating Lenore Case into a true member of the team and creating a trio would have made her screen time both worthy and actually important to the evolution of the story.

In a day and age where we’re growing closer to a woman serving as president of our United States and females regularly serve atop the executive ranks of big businesses, we’re ready for a lady to mastermind a superhero operation instead of just being the superhero’s secretary in disguise.

Despite a score of issues with Rogen’s story direction, “The Green Hornet” succeeds on one critical level for any big-budget superhero film: it’s a fun thrill ride. And he also successfully adds a second ingredient you see less often in a superhero film: humor. Like you’re used to seeing with Rogen, laughs return aplenty this time.



Left to right: Director Michel Gondry, Seth Rogen and Jay Chou in “The Green Hornet”.

Image credit: Jaimie Trueblood

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The collaboration between visual master Michel Gondry and Seth Rogen as comic relief works best when pairing Gondry’s ability to titillate the optic senses with Rogen’s aptitude in gut busting your belly. If Rogen’s writing evolved with more honesty, humility and authenticity, then we’d truly have a filmmaking duo for the ages.

*“The Green Hornet” stars Seth Rogen, Jay Chou, Cameron Diaz, Tom Wilkinson, Christoph Waltz, Edward Furlong, David Harbour, Edward James Olmos, Jamie Harris, Chad Coleman and Joshua Erenberg from director Michel Gondry and writers Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg. The film is rated “PG-13” for sequences of violent action, language, sensuality and drug content with a running time of 119 minutes. “The Green Hornet” opened everywhere on Jan. 14, 2011.*



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