

Michael Bay-Produced 'I Am Number Four' a Solid Block of Superhero Gouda

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Rating: **2.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – While the new sci-fi/superhero film “I Am Number Four” can be easily dismissed as yet another “Twilight” knockoff, the power of two mega-producers arms the film with nearly as much right as it does wrong. Thankfully for Chicagoans the film doesn’t star Brett Favre because of his numerical jersey affiliation, but with a story this weak, that stretch wouldn’t be too far.

With “I play a lot of Xbox” as the film’s only funny line from the mouth of Callan McAuliffe after decimating his first bad guy, “I Am Number Four” has one of the cheesiest scripts in recent memory. Words like the “Mogadorians” (the enemy) soil this script and the “story” is merely an insulting excuse to exhibit some genuinely neat-o special effects.



Sarah (Dianna Agron) is awed by the new ability John (Alex Pettyfer) shares with her in “I Am Number Four”.

Image credit: DreamWorks II Distribution Co.

The screenplay comes from Alfred Gough (“Spider-Man 2”), Miles Millar (“Spider-Man 2”) and Marti Noxon (“Buffy the Vampire Slayer”) based on the novel by Jobie Hughes and James Frey. Despite a painfully anemic script that could be better written by a foreign-language student who doesn’t know English, the film does itself some actual justice with its special effects.

With some big names attached to “I Am Number Four” (“Transformers,” “Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen” and “Transformers: Dark of the Moon” director Michael Bay produces and Steven Spielberg was previously attached as a producer), the film invests heavily and successfully in its action sequences and special effects. “Disturbia” director D.J. Caruso directs “I Am Number Four” with some familiar action sequences from “Eagle Eye”.

Speaking of the film’s action violence, “I Am Number Four” is rated “PG-13” for its intense sequences of violence and action and for language. While this film plays to a similar demographic as the “Harry Potter” and “Twilight” flicks, its action sequences are more like “The Dark Knight,” “The Incredible Hulk” and “Iron Man” (all of which are also rated “PG-13”). Parents should think twice about bringing their 13-year-old kids to this Disney/DreamWorks picture.



Number 6 (Teresa Palmer) prepares to confront the enemy in “I Am Number Four”.

Image credit: DreamWorks II Distribution Co.

Aside from its special effects, on the positive front “I Am Number Four” has three main stars whose names you probably don’t know: Callan McAuliffe, Guillermo Navarro and Trevor Rabin. The unknown McAuliffe should be genuinely noted in “I Am Number Four” as the film’s best actor. He also features the film’s only touching plot line.

McAuliffe as Sam has always been conflicted about whether or not his alien-believing dad is bat crazy. While his life so far has been one long episode of “The X-Files,” he later learn that his father was right all along thanks to Alex Pettyfer (the film’s new Robert Pattinson). McAuliffe’s quest alongside lead actor and most-powerful-superhero guy Pettyfer is vindicating as it breathes truth into all of his dad’s crazy antics. Sam’s motivations in the film – and only his – are actually understandable.

“I Am Number Four” also features deliciously fitting cinematography from Oscar winner Guillermo Navarro of “Pan’s Labyrinth” and “Hellboy” fame. Trevor Rabin is the third and final star of this film. His original music notably and memorably complements its action and dramatic sequences.



Number 6 (Teresa Palmer) uses her special abilities to shield John (Alex Pettyfer) from a fiery blast in “I Am Number Four”.

Image credit: DreamWorks II Distribution Co.

A veteran composer, Rabin’s music can be heard across the film gamut in “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice,” “G-Force,” “Get Smart,” “National Treasure: Book of Secrets,” “Hot Rod,” “The Guardian,” “Snakes on a Plane,” “Con Air,” “Deep Blue Sea” and “Armageddon”.

On the other hand, while Timothy Olyphant (“The Girl Next Door”) typically treats us to a quality show, not this time. He replaced Sharlto Copley (who dropped out due to scheduling conflicts) who was memorable in the recent alien film “District 9”. Copley as the “father” of star Alex Pettyfer (“John Smith”) would have been much more snug as a bug.

Even though Copley doesn’t make it in “I Am Number Four,” the same cheesilicious “I’ll come back for you” plot point does. Just as Copley’s character promises to return to Earth for his friendly alien buddy in “District 9,” so does Pettyfer swear to return for his one true lifetime love: Dianna Agron of “Glee” fame.



Sarah (Dianna Agron) watches in disbelief as John (Alex Pettyfer) stops a police car in its tracks in “I Am Number Four”.

Image credit: DreamWorks II Distribution Co.

Agron (Quinn on “Glee”) plays the exact same character in “I Am Number Four” as she does in “Glee” because the adorable shtick works for her and she doesn’t yet know how to do anything else. That said, she doesn’t have a chance to believably build a lifetime of love for Pettyfer. She’s just getting over another high school boy (the stereotypical class bully) and merely fawning for the superhero with the super-powered hands.

Now Mr. Special Hands, on the other hand, happens to love Agron not just because she’s cute as a button but because he’s just like a gibbon ape, gray wolf, termite, coyote, barn owl, beaver, bald eagle, golden eagle, condor, swan, brolga crane, French angel fish, sandhill crane, pigeon, prion, red-tailed hawk, anglerfish, osprey, prairie vole or black vulture. Yes, like these animals, his strictly monogamous alien race also picks just one mate for life. Aw.



Sam (Callan McAuliffe) keeps an eye out for trouble in “I Am Number Four”.

Image credit: DreamWorks II Distribution Co.

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While the jury’s out on if the film cha-chings enough box-office dough to justify a sequel, we’re left with two questions: Who is Number 5 (literally, because the film doesn’t say) and how can we all be as badass as Number 6 (Adelaide-born actress/model Teresa Palmer)?

In a battle between Palmer as Number 6 (who can shield the pretty boy against fiery blasts and fly with mostly invisible blue streaks through thin air) and Carrie-Anne Moss as Trinity from “The Matrix,” we’d have one hell of an entertaining toss-up.

“I Am Number Four” stars Alex Pettyfer, Timothy Olyphant, Dianna Agron, Teresa Palmer, Callan McAuliffe, Kevin Durand, Jake Abel, Jeff Hochendoner, Patrick Sebes, Greg Townley, Reuben Langdon, Emily Wickersham, Molly McGinnis, Brian Howe and Andy Owen from director D.J. Caruso and writers Alfred Gough, Miles Millar and Marti Noxon based on the novel by Jobie Hughes and James Frey. “I Am Number Four” is rated “PG-13” for intense sequences of violence and action and for language. The film, which has a running time of 110 minutes, opened on Feb. 18, 2011.



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