

## Loud, Annoying ‘Battle: Los Angeles’ Fails in Spectacular Ways

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on March 11, 2011 - 4:36pm

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Rating: **1.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – It used to be an insult to say that a loud action movie reminded a critic of a video game. The fact is that most recent video games feature better storytelling and more entertainment value than the horrendous “Battle: Los Angeles,” an annoying movie with such inept direction that it’s not even fun on a visceral level. Even the explosions are boring.

It’s almost as if someone was watching the 2010 Academy Awards and wondered what it would be like to merge Best Picture nominees “District 9” and “The Hurt Locker” (one shudders at the thought of other possible mash-ups like “Avatar” meets “Precious”). “Battle: Los Angeles” is so derivative of superior films that you’ll spend half the running time merely making a list of movies that you’d rather be watching. With horrible camera work, mediocre (at best) special effects, laughable dialogue, and direction that never grounds any of the action with something worth caring about, “Battle: Los Angeles” is one of the worst films of the first quarter of 2011 and arguably its biggest disappointment.



Battle: Los Angeles

*Photo credit: Sony Pictures*

Aaron Eckhart, seriously taking a step back after career-best turns in “The Dark Knight” and “Rabbit Hole,” plays the only real character in the film — Marine Staff Sergeant Nantz, who recently led a platoon into tragedy overseas and will, of course, find redemption in saving us from an alien invasion. After a brief set-up in which several of the jarheads are given the most annoying, paper-thin personality traits (one has a brother who died in Nantz’s platoon, one is an alleged virgin, one is getting married soon), the action of the piece kicks in with meteors falling around the world

The poor Earthlings realize that they weren’t meteors when some horrendously-designed aliens march out of the ocean and begin an assault on the city of angels. Nantz and his team must travel to a police station, extract some civilians, and get back to an extraction point. Along the way, they pick up a Tech Sergeant (Michelle Rodriguez) and a few non-soldiers (Bridget Moynihan, Michael Pena). It’s all merely an excuse

for shaky camera work that disguises the fact that almost nothing worthwhile or interesting is going on.

Let’s start with the alien design. You may think it doesn’t matter, but the best sci-fi movies have memorable villains. The bad guys in “Battle: Los Angeles” are nondescript and boring. They are devices for explosions. The lack of interesting characters on either side of this battle wouldn’t be such a significant problem if there was a single memorable action sequence. Most of the action scenes involve the new trend of shaky camera work that is taken to such extremes here that it almost seems like a parody of movies like this one.



Battle: Los Angeles

*Photo credit: Sony Pictures*

The script by Christopher Bertolini should be expected to have a few lines of cheesy dialogue and a bit of patriotic manipulation, but “Battle: Los Angeles” is laughable in both departments. People don’t talk like this. They don’t act like this. Even in movies. There are scenes, including one in which Eckhart’s character has an emotional monologue about the men he lost, that I find it hard to believe someone didn’t question. It’s manipulative babble that adds fuel to the fire of people who don’t like sci-fi/action movies. The script is about on par with a SyFy Original Movie.

And then there’s a centerpiece sequence on a freeway that is one of the most ineptly designed and conceived sequences in years. It’s around here when most people will realize that they don’t care about any of the action that’s happening on the screen. And they can’t follow it. Director Jonathan Liebesman (the man who gave the world “Darkness Falls” and the prequel to the remake of “The Texas Chainsaw Massacre” and clearly must be stopped) never grounds the piece in anything relatable.

“Battle: Los Angeles” is a piece that should have a ticking clock structure in that Santa Monica is going to be bombed to pieces at a certain time but we never really know where we’re at in that timeline. And Liebesman is a horrible director when it comes to conveying space or distance. We never know how far the men have gone or have to go. Why on Earth wouldn’t Liebesman have used any LA landmarks? It’s all a series of nondescript locations and streets. With no sense of time, place, or character, the people of “Battle: Los Angeles” merely become like avatars in a video game. Wait, I take that back — I’d rather play most recent video games than sit through “Battle: Los Angeles” again.

*“Battle: Los Angeles” stars Aaron Eckhart, Michelle Rodriguez, Bridget Moynihan, and Michael Pena. It was written by Christopher Bertolini and directed by Jonathan Liebesman. It is rated PG-13 and opened on March 11th, 2011.*



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