

‘Sucker Punch’ Has Dazzling Imagery, Comic Book Wham-Bam

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on March 25, 2011 - 5:36am

- [Abbie Cornish](#) [2]
- [Carla Gugino](#) [3]
- [Emily Browning](#) [4]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [5]
- [Jamie Chung](#) [6]
- [Jena Malone](#) [7]
- [Movie Review](#) [8]
- [Oscar Isaac](#) [9]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [10]
- [Scott Glenn](#) [11]
- [Sucker Punch](#) [12]
- [Vanessa Hudgens](#) [13]
- [Warner Bros. Pictures](#) [14]
- [Zach Snyder](#) [15]

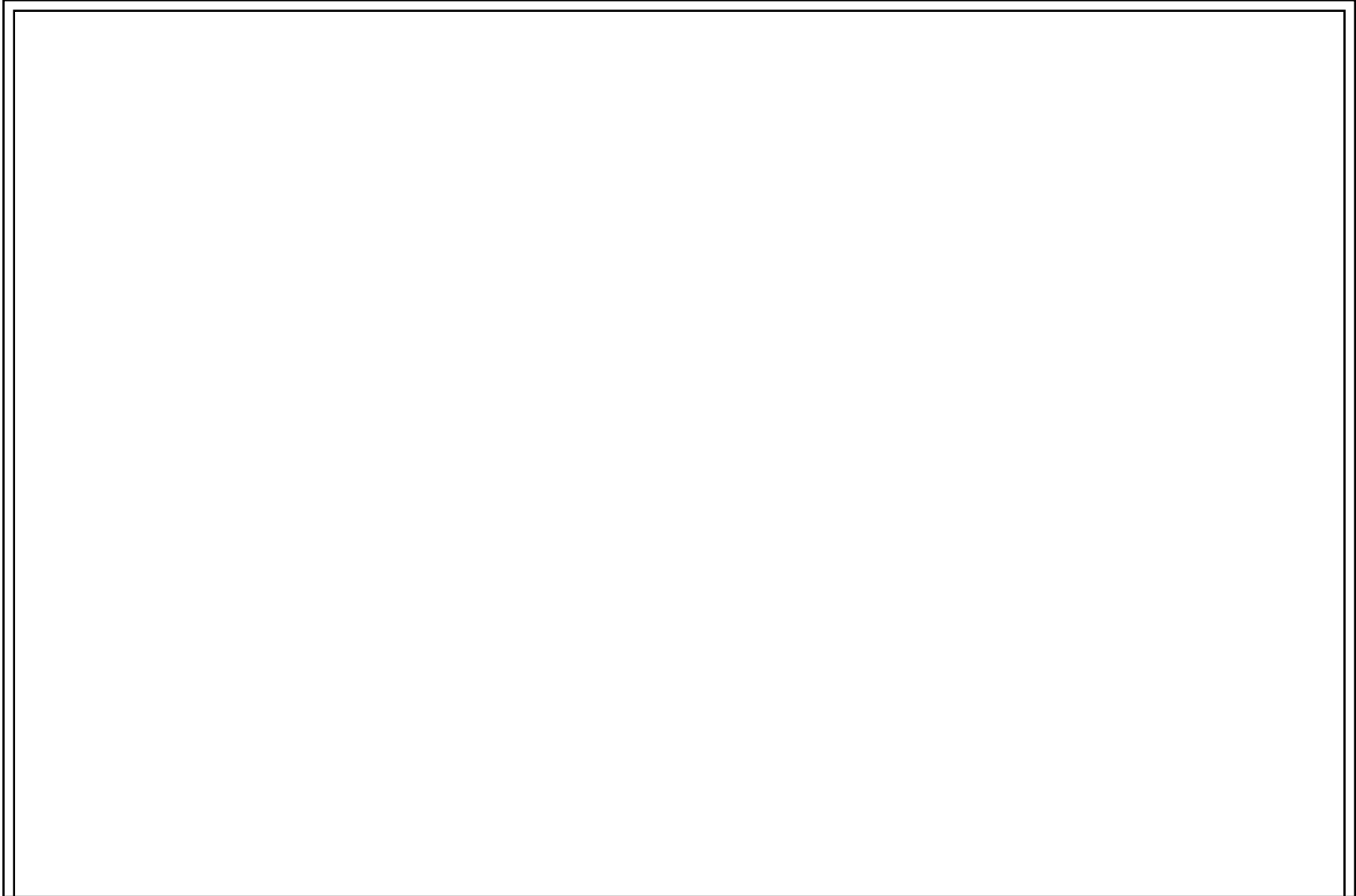


CHICAGO – It’s a pleasure to see the comic book film done right, especially with the visionary guidance of director Zach Snyder (“300”). “Sucker Punch” is an amazing treat, a feast of eye candy and incredible adventure.

Working in three parallel planes, Sucker Punch creates a theme of female empowerment as more than a revenge factor, it actually fulfills the promise of both the individual struggle and the super-heroic team. The story also has a richness that is deeper than the usual Zach Snyder fare, surpassing even the darkness of “Watchmen” (2009) in revealing secrets and character energy.

Baby Doll (Emily Browning) is a steely-eyed teenager whose stepfather (Gerald Plunkett) flies into a rage after he finds out he’s been disinherited from her family fortune. After killing her sister during a tussle, he pins the rap on Baby Doll, and commits her to a mental institution. There she meets Dr. Gorski (Carla Gugino), an unconventional psychotherapist whose techniques include music and movement as a healing agent.

Baby Doll drifts into a parallel world, where Dr. Gorski is a floor show director for a cheap and tawdry nightclub. Doll meets fellow performers Sweet Pea (Abbie Cornish) amd her sister Rocket (Jena Malone) and is asked to do some improvisational dancing. As Gorski puts on the music, Baby Doll’s dance materializes yet another parallel world, this time inventing herself as a ultra-hero, given instructions by the Wise Man (Scott Glenn). To escape her prisons, the Wise Man advises her to collect four specific items from various obstacles within her captivity.





Rocking the Cradle: Emily Browning as Baby Doll in ‘Sucker Punch’
Photo credit: Clay Enos for Warner Bros. Pictures

To obtain these items, it is up to Baby Doll to use the music and the dance as sort of hypnotic state, seducing the sleazy club owner (Blue, portrayed by Oscar Isaac) into distraction. The dance also allows her companions – Sweet Pea, Rocket and Amber the Pilot (Jamie Chung) – to help her battle demons in these diverse other worlds. It is when these assorted demons are cast away that freedom becomes another step closer.

This is high level imagination from the mind of Zack Snyder, who created the story and shares the screenplay credit with Steve Shibuya. It is so oriented toward the unique morality of comic book adaptation that it feels like it came from a graphic novel source. At the same time, the narrative is wholly one-of-a-kind, bordering on a madness that constantly goes over the top. From the mental institution to the nightclub and beyond, there exists distinct elements of the same challenge, going deeper into a rabbit hole of surreal warfare.

The third level of these parallel worlds (the one that Baby Doll conjures when she dances) are nearly indescribable. Each new atmospheric challenge has to do with the four items Baby Doll must procure, and the first couple of scenarios are rooted in the World Wars of the 20th Century – if they were played out in the Terminator universe. The music matches the visual insanity, for example the use of The Beatles “Tomorrow Never Knows” behind the final challenge (done in a mad cover version by Alison Mosshart and Carla Azar) is possibly what John Lennon acidly envisioned when he wrote the song.

The acting is almost comedic, given the story’s melodrama and old fashioned sense of presence. Given the vast canyons in which the parallel visions operate, the shouting of girl orders in the midst of sheer chaos came off as if the girls were playing in the back yard, that’s how archly low-keyed some of that dialogue was presented. Scott Glenn in particular had some obvious camera winking as the Wise Man, but he also follows through with the persona, as in ‘hey, it’s that dude again.’

Feminists and movie geeks can debate the theme of empowerment within the subject matter, there are opposing messages. The women are dressed scantily and provocatively, and the concept of Baby Doll, both her name and presumed dance skills (the interpretive dances she does to conjure the parallel worlds are unseen but apparently spectacular based on the reaction of the nightclub denizens), have a objectifying sexuality to them. But the women also kick serious ass against a host of patriarchal “enemies,” so Women in Film classes will have thesis topics for years to come.



Jamie Chung (Amber), Emily Browning, Abbie Cornish (Sweet Pea) and Jena Malone (Rocket) in ‘Sucker Punch’
Photo credit: Warner Bros. Pictures

There can be an argument for overkill – as if we’re stuck in a pinball machine rather than watching a film – and some of the parallel world scenarios work better than others, but the whole ride is such an audacious roller coaster it’s fun just to strap in. This seems like the further evolution of combining gaming and the movies, more interactive and manipulative of the senses. For better or worst, this film is where the action is.

Zack Snyder is becoming the filmmaker to watch. Each mention of his new projects will generate another round of “what’s next” internet rumoring (he is taking on “Superman”). It’s always cool to have artists like that, especially when they can deliver sheer outrageousness like Sucker Punch, and turn it up to the Imax.

“Sucker Punch” opens everywhere on March 25th. Featuring Emily Browning, Abbie Cornish, Jena Malone, Vanessa Hudgens, Jamie Chung, Carla Gugino, Gerald Plunkett, Oscar Isaac and Scott Glenn. Screenplay by Zack Snyder and Steve Shibuya, directed by Zack Snyder. Rated “PG-13”



[16]

By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [17]
Senior Staff Writer
HollywoodChicago.com
pat@hollywoodchicago.com [16]

© 2011 Patrick McDonald, HollywoodChicago.com

Source URL (retrieved on Mar 29 2024 - 7:33am):

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/13747/sucker-punch-has-dazzling-imagery-comic-book-wham-bam>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hankq>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/abbie-cornish>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/carla-gugino>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/emily-browning>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/hollywoodchicagocom-content>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/jamie-chung>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/jena-malone>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/review.html>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/oscar-isaac>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/patrick-mcdonald>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/scott-glenn>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/sucker-punch>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/vanessa-hudgens>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/warner-bros-pictures>
- [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/zach-snyder>
- [16] <mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com>

[17] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#PAT>