

‘Mission: Impossible: Ghost Protocol’ Rocks Your Holiday

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on December 15, 2011 - 4:52pm

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Rating: **4.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Brad Bird proves that he can make the leap from Pixar to action with one of the best genre films of the year, the adrenalized “Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol.” Proving there is a way to make a big budget franchise installment that feels vibrant, alive, and like more than just a pathetic retread of what has come before (unlike this year’s “Pirates of the Caribbean” and “Sherlock Holmes” entries), “Ghost Protocol” delivers with breakneck pace and stellar action choreography. This movie wastes little time – it’s a lean, mean, action machine.

After a brief intro in which an IMF agent (Josh Holloway of “LOST”) is assassinated by a gorgeous killer (Lea Seydoux), Bird’s film starts its international adventure (nothing takes place stateside until the epilogue) in a Russian prison. While Ethan Hunt (Tom Cruise) lies in his bed, bouncing a rock against the wall, two agents are working to break him out. Technical master Benji (Simon Pegg) taps into the system and unlocks the prisoner’s doors, starting a riot. In a scene scored to Dean Martin’s “Ain’t That a Kick in the Head,” Hunt works through the fracas to find the prisoner who had fed him information and save him from the chaos as well, arriving at the extraction point moments before Jane (Paula Patton) makes the floor disappear.



Mission: Impossible — Ghost Protocol

Photo credit: Paramount Pictures

Hunt can barely catch his breath before he’s forced into another mission that he simply must choose to accept. It turns out that the blonde

assassin got Russian nuclear launch codes in that prologue and now Hunt, Benji, and Jane have to break into the Kremlin in an attempt to get the other piece of the puzzle that could start WWII in the wrong hands. The movie really starts when the nefarious Hendricks (Michael Nyqvist) piggy backs on Hunt's mission, steals a nuclear device, and frames the IMF by blowing up the Kremlin. Completely disavowed, Hunt, Jane, and Benji are joined by a U.S. Agent named Brandt (Jeremy Renner) in their effort to avert nuclear war.

"Ghost Protocol" flies from Russia to Dubai to Mumbai in a series of increasingly-remarkable action sequences. What's perhaps most enjoyable about "Protocol" is the on-the-ground (or in-the-sky) approach to action. What I mean by that is no one here has super powers. Every punch connects. Every kick shatters. Every jump, spin, turn – this is the kind of action choreography you don't see that often any more in that one can tell that most of it is happening in the scene, not in post-production. It adds an undeniable visceral charge to the entire film, upping the stakes and getting the viewer to the edge of his seat.



Mission: Impossible — Ghost Protocol

Photo credit: Paramount Pictures

No more so than in the soon-to-be-legendary Burj Tower sequence in which I expect some viewers to have to close their eyes as they develop a new fear of heights. Especially in IMAX, this is one of the most remarkable scenes of the year as Hunt climbs the tallest building in the world with high-tech gloves that start malfunctioning and a sandstorm on the horizon. Honestly, everything that happens in Dubai, from the outside of the building to the inside to the sand-driven car chase that follows is worth the price of admission. Twice.

The best thing about "Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol" is how incredibly well Bird and his team have trimmed the fat, even on a movie that runs over two hours. There could have been a bit more fine-tuning in the first act but the rest of this movie FLIES. It is incredibly difficult to make a movie that's this heavy with action that doesn't once feel monotonous or repetitive. Each location, each character, each wonderful bit of technology – the film is constantly refreshing itself so as not to lose that rollercoaster feeling for which we go to films like this one.



Mission: Impossible — Ghost Protocol

Photo credit: Paramount Pictures

I also loved the filmmaker's understanding of what has always been a hallmark of the "M:I" series — technology. Contact lenses with facial recognition software embedded in them, magnetic suits, and, of course, masks are just a part of the cavalcade of technical tricks. Cruise and the producers on the film wisely realize that in a world where our smart phones are constantly updating and our houses are becoming technological fortresses, the best way to refresh a series like this one is to place an emphasis on the toys of the spy trade.

It's not flawless. Paula Patton proves again that she has very limited range, coming off especially false in a few emotional beats about the loss of her former partner. There could have been a more talented actress for the role, although it should be noted that she handles the physical stuff admirably, both the action and a seduction scene in the final act. It's when she's forced to try and make the character three-dimensional (something the amazing Renner does opposite her) that the film falters the most. There's also an oddly tacked-on epilogue that feels like a product of a test screening that wanted a more emotional ending.

These are minor complaints for a major action movie. Many questioned whether or not the Pixar wunderkind could make the transition from animation to live action. He does so with style. I can't wait to see what he could do with an original property. Actually, scratch that. I kind of just want everyone to come back for another one of these movies. When's the last time you said that about a fourth entry in a franchise?

"Mission: Impossible — Ghost Protocol" stars Tom Cruise, Paula Patton, Simon Pegg, Jeremy Renner, Michael Nyqvist, and Lea Seydoux. It was written by Josh Appelbaum & Andre Nemec and directed by Brad Bird. It is rated PG-13 and will be released at IMAX theaters on December 16th, 2011, followed by theaters everywhere on December 21st, 2011. See it in IMAX if you can.



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