

‘John Carter’ is Poor Man’s ‘Star Wars,’ ‘Avatar’ With Kitschy Taylor Kitsch, Soft-Porn Lynn Collins

Submitted by [HollywoodChicago.com](http://www.hollywoodchicago.com) [1] on March 10, 2012 - 5:35am

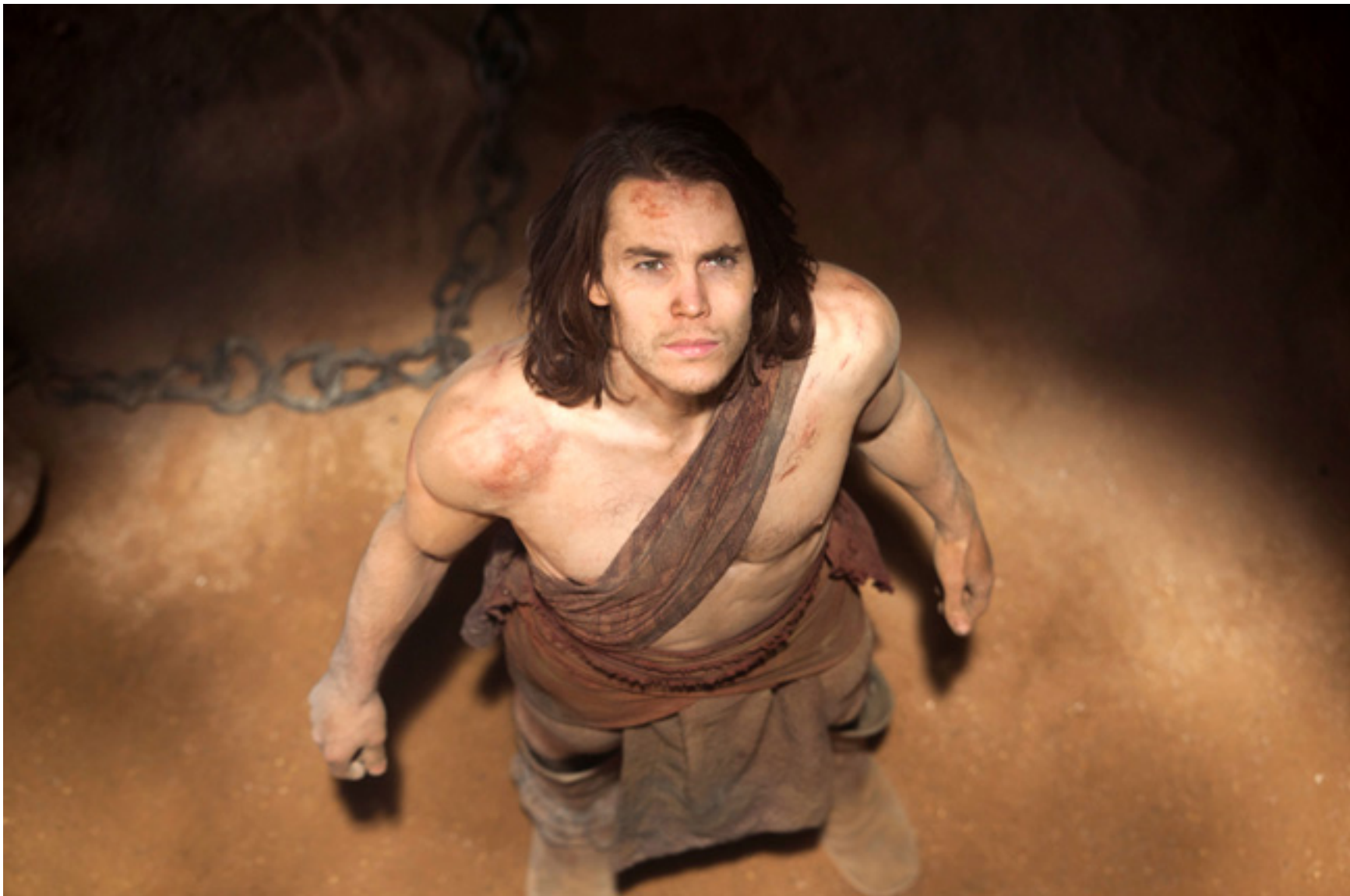
- [Adam Fendelman](#) [2]
- [Andrew Stanton](#) [3]
- [Avatar](#) [4]
- [Bryan Cranston](#) [5]
- [Ciar n Hinds](#) [6]
- [Dominic West](#) [7]
- [Edgar Rice Burroughs](#) [8]
- [James Purefoy](#) [9]
- [John Carter](#) [10]
- [Lynn Collins](#) [11]
- [Mark Strong](#) [12]
- [Movie Review](#) [13]
- [Samantha Morton](#) [14]
- [Star Wars](#) [15]
- [Taylor Kitsch](#) [16]
- [Thomas Haden Church](#) [17]
- [Willem Dafoe](#) [18]



Rating: **2.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Usually it’s critics critically flogging a film when we say it weakly lacks originality and borrows too heavily from others. Disney’s “John Carter” attacks that classic grumble by promotionally comparing itself to “Star Wars” and “Avatar” before critics even had a chance to deduct points for it.

But while being proactive in its contrasts, the film also attempts to sell moviegoers on one unknown fact: The basis for Pixar writer and director Andrew Stanton’s (“WALL-E,” “Finding Nemo,” “Toy Story”) story actually originates *before* its George Lucas and James Cameron predecessors.



Taylor Kitsch stars as the title character in “John Carter”.

Image credit: Frank Connor, Disney

Stanton’s current creation is based on the classic stories of a 19th-century Earth man who gets accidentally transplanted to Mars. And it’s been more than 100 years since “Tarzan” creator Edgar Rice Burroughs crafted the character John Carter: the hero of his science-fiction “Barsoom” (Mars) book series.

Prior to his acceptance, Stanton’s hot seat was dropped like flies by many others. Robert Rodriguez was signed as the film’s director in 2004 when it was known as “A Princess of Mars”. Then Kerry Conran (“Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow”) took over. And then it fell into the directorial hands of Jon Favreau of “Iron Man” fame. Focusing on “Star Trek” instead, the film’s rights transferred from Paramount to Disney in 2007.



Lynn Collins (left) and Taylor Kitsch in “John Carter”.

Image credit: Disney

Through all the flipping and flopping, there’s no surer-fire way for a film to ink its own \$250-million obituary than by contrasting itself to two of Hollywood’s most titanic films when it only has half the heart, soul and story of either one.

Featuring an all-star cast with many heavy hitters you might not even know are in it – including Willem Dafoe, Samantha Morton, Thomas Haden Church, Mark Strong, Ciarán Hinds, Dominic West and Bryan Cranston – the film’s humor falls flat. And it’s unevenly paced with periodically perplexing plotting that forces you to itch your head even if it’s free of lice. The “romance” between disgustingly beautiful co-leads Taylor Kitsch and Lynn Collins is more artificial than a Chicken McNugget. Individually, these scorchingly hot stars are delicious to eyeball, but even the eye candy isn’t enough to make their treat a believable love duo.



Willem Dafoe (left) and Taylor Kitsch in “John Carter”.

Image credit: Frank Connor, Disney

That said, when not trying to convince you of any true chemistry with Collins, Taylor Kitsch shows you why he’s not just a “Friday Night Lights” TV star. Still, he can’t be bothered to wear a shirt so all his gym work can be exploited like Taylor Lautner’s cut abs in the “Twilight” franchise.

And Kitsch’s kitschy brown hair locks delicately wisp in the wind like Fabio if he was ever young, attractive and not the king of cheese. Even so, Kitsch finds a way to embody this troubled-soul role in a way that’s even better than the script he’s been given. Kitsch as John Carter even makes you cheer on the fatuous fact that he can inexplicably leap buildings in a single bound even though no one else on Mars can.

Kitsch won the title role in “John Carter” after Jon Hamm and Josh Duhamel were earlier considered. Perhaps to earn him interesting points or “I tried really hard” industry accolades, Kitsch claims to have endured liver complications due to his demanding diet and physical training.



Lynn Collins (center) in “John Carter”.

Image credit: Frank Connor, Disney

When you’re able to unglue your eyes from Kitsch’s abs and actually listen to the story, the film’s language – including its fantasy planets, cultural terms and characters – are ricockulously cheeselicious. Zodangan? The Goddess Issus? Tharks? Barsoom? Woola? Dejah Thoris of Helium? A film can’t better epitomize a cheesy script than this.

Its lengthy 132 minutes try to compress a “Romeo and Juliet”-like bloody fight and cultural difference (i.e. the Montagues vs. the Capulets) into a story that fails at connecting you to a dozen primary characters. You end up not caring about most of them. It’s only the fat, Speedy Gonzales-like lizard/dog Woola (think Lassie of Mars) who wins all of your humor and compassion points. Woola is the only character in this film who incites your connective emotion.



Taylor Kitsch battles white apes in “John Carter”.

Image credit: Disney

After the length this film was trapped in development hell – literally a whopping 79 years – its result is disastrously disappointing. Pre-production for a film version began long before Stanton was even born. In 1931, “Looney Tunes” director Robert Clampett tried to sway author Edgar Rice Burroughs to construct an animated feature out of the first book in his series: “A Princess of Mars”. That first Burroughs story made its debut in 1912 in a magazine serial, which means the 2012 feature film marks the centenary (100th anniversary) of the character’s first appearance.

Today’s “John Carter” adapts that Martian princess story. Had it happened back in the 1930s, it would have become the world’s first animated feature prior to Disney’s “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs” in 1937. “John Carter” finally rose out of development hell in Jan. 2010 when filming officially started in London. The film is only the third live-action feature under the Disney name to be hit with a racy (for Disney) “PG-13” rating in the U.S. following “Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl” and “Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time”.

RELATED CONTENT

★ [More reviews from Adam Fendelman.](#) [2]

Its creative environments, “Gladiator”-like fight sequences and special effects are the film’s primary redeeming grace. But overall, this review is forced to focus more on the project’s genuinely fascinating history than what’s actually in the film. Its incredible struggle to fruition is leaps and bounds more gripping than what ended up being defecated onto the big screen.

“John Carter” stars Taylor Kitsch, Lynn Collins, Willem Dafoe, Samantha Morton, Thomas Haden Church, Mark Strong, Ciarán Hinds, Dominic West, Bryan Cranston, James Purefoy, Polly Walker and Daryl Sabara from writer and director Andrew Stanton. The film, which has a running time of 132 minutes and is rated “PG-13” for intense sequences of violence and action, opened on March 9, 2012.

By [ADAM FENDELMAN](#) [20]
Publisher
HollywoodChicago.com



[19]

adam@hollywoodchicago.com [19]

© 2012 Adam Fendelman, HollywoodChicago.com LLC

Source URL (retrieved on *Apr 18 2024 - 11:44pm*):

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/17765/john-carter-is-poor-mans-star-wars-avatar-taylor-kitsch-lynn-collins>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hollywoodchicagocom>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/adam-fendelman>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/andrew-stanton>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/avatar>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/bryan-cranston>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/ciar-n-hinds>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/dominic-west>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/edgar-rice-burroughs>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/james-purefoy>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/john-carter>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/lynn-collins>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/mark-strong>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/review.html>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/samantha-morton>
- [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/star-wars>
- [16] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/taylor-kitsch>
- [17] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/thomas-haden-church>
- [18] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/willem-dafoe>
- [19] <mailto:adam@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [20] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#ADAM>