

‘Pacific Rim’ is Classic Sci-fi Cult Movie Joy

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on July 11, 2013 - 4:47pm

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Rating: **4.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – Leave it to the wondrous auteur, director Guillermo del Toro, to push the boundaries of giant science fiction epics simply by paying homage to their predecessors. The grand, glorious embrace of “Pacific Rim” leaves no stone of cult film fun unturned.

Yes, the story is sappy and has been done before, but it is in the twists to these conventions that sets “Pacific Rim” apart. Unlike, for example, “Star Trek Into Darkness,” it is the characters who are as big as life as the giant robots that do battle with an underground army of monstrous dinosaur-like creatures. Sound familiar? Yeah, it’s a tribute to Godzilla, and Transformers, and Giant Robots, and the ingenuity of man to come up with something audacious and cumbersome when faced with the end of the world. The film’s cast is dead serious and mockingly funny, which makes them all the more human when facing the end. In the tradition of the season, this is two hours and 20 minutes of good time entertainment. Hell, I’d recommend springing for the 3D fee and the \$7 popcorn.

In the near future, giant monsters identified as the “Kaiju” (a Japanese word meaning strange beast...Godzilla-like) have arisen from a dimensional hole in the Pacific Ocean. These monsters come in waves and categories – with each level, up to five, becoming more unstoppable. The world bands together to create incredible giant robotic machines, called Jaegers, to fight the Kaiju.



Jaeger Bombers: Raleigh (Charlie Hunnam) and Mako Mori (Rinko Kikuchi) in ‘Pacific Rim’

Photo credit: Warner Bros Pictures

The humans behind these machines include pilots Raleigh Becket (Charlie Hunnam), Mako Mori (the great Rinko Kikuchi) and their

commander Stacker Pentecost (Idris Elba). They are aided by the boys in the science labs, including “Kaiju Groupie” Dr. Newton Geizler (Charlie Day) and numbers nerd Dr. Herman Gottlieb (Burn Gorman). Also present in a world gone mad is the leader of the underground economy, Hannibal Chau (Ron Perlman). All these folks need to team up to defeat the demons both inside and outside their sphere.

There is joy and passion in every frame of this film, as director del Toro reaches into his bag of filmmaker tricks to enrich the proceedings with tributes to Japanese monsters, anime, Akira Kurosawa, apocalyptic films, post-apocalyptic films and even Steven Spielberg. This tributing adds the flavor to the basic conventional hero-must-save-the-day story, plus the additional twists, turns and occasional cult movie-type comic relief.

The characters were monumental in their earnestness. The main hero Raleigh is the perfect motivated presence (“they killed my brother!”) and his erstwhile partner Mako Mori wrestles her own past (“this is for my family!”). The key to working the Jaegers is a mind meld, so these heroes must share both honorable traits and the sins of memory. This makes for a fascinating and fantastic flashback in the midst of the story, a delicate reminder of the incentive effects of both survival and the avenging nature.

The stand-out players in their roles include Rinko Kichuchi as Mako Mori – she has been memorable in films as diverse as “Babel” (2006) and “The Brothers Bloom” (2008). She crystallizes the humanity necessary for the role. Charlie Day (“It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia”) eschews his signature beard and helps to save the world as Dr. Newton Geizler. Idris Elba as Commander Pentecost – what a name! – is more of a man than anyone will ever be. And is there a better character presence than the great Ron Perlman? That would be NO. The audience applauded his first appearance at the screening.



Saving the Day: Dr. Newton Geizler (Charlie Day) in ‘Pacific Rim’
Photo credit: Warner Bros Pictures

There are nits to pick. The sheer gigantic nature of the Jaegers and the Kaijus are so overwhelming that there was a tendency to lose perspective on screen during their battles, but that pales next to the characters and story that accompanies them. del Toro has sought to re-imagine the Japanese monster pictures of the past, those Toho Studio imports that made the afternoons of those long gone “3:30 Movies” that much more gleeful.

There is a lot to experience with “Pacific Rim,” but the beauty of it all is that it’s never really overpowering. We get comfort and energy in the risks that the heroes take, both in science and battle, that wage war on our petty fears.

“Pacific Rim” opens everywhere on July 12th in 3D, IMAX and regular screenings. See local listings for show times, screening type and theaters. Featuring Charlie Hunnam, Idris Elba, Rinko Kikuchi, Charlie Day, Burn Gorman, Ron Perlman and Mana Ashida. Screenplay by Guillermo del Toro and Travis Beacham. Directed by Guillermo del Toro. Rated “PG-13”



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