

Vin Diesel Returns to Iconic Character in B-Movie ‘Riddick’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 5, 2013 - 2:18pm

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Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Did anyone else think there would be another film about Richard Riddick, Vin Diesel’s character from the great “Pitch Black” and not-great “The Chronicles of Riddick”? Me neither. But writer/director David Twohy won’t give up on this character, one he turns into even more of an iconized superhero in his third film, “Riddick,” the most B-movie of the three. When it embraces that low-budget, B-movie, John Carpenter-esque aesthetic, it works enough to recommend as a late-Summer bit of escapism but the movie is too bloated to stand next to the first. Still, more than after “Chronicles,” I’d happily see a fourth “Riddick” film. Why not at this point?

The bloated opening act of the 119-minute “Riddick” is its weakest chapter and many won’t be able to get past this extended riff on “A Boy and His Dog” as Riddick (Vin Diesel) is forced to deal with life alone on an inhospitable planet after being stranded there. He fends off space vultures, trains local dingoes to the point that one becomes his animal companion, and trains himself to be able to pass a hideous Giger-esque creature blocking his path to potential civilization. He can see grass and water in the distance. The sad part is that it takes him so damn long to get there. If “Riddick” comes on cable before you get a chance to see it, watch something else for the first half-hour. You’ll be better off.



Riddick

Photo credit: Universal Pictures

Because the last 90 minutes of “Riddick” is a pretty good sci-fi/action flick. When Riddick gets to his destination, he finds a mercenary station, where he scans himself, sending off an emergency beacon to any manhunters looking to collect the most wanted criminal in the universe. Two groups show up. The first is a ragtag clan led by the obnoxious Santana (Jordi Molla) and is more brawn than brains. The second is headed by Johns (Matt Nable), a man with a connection to the action of the first movie, and Dahl (the great Katee Sackhoff of “Battlestar Galactica” fame). Riddick instructs them all to leave one ship and depart on the other if they want to live. Then things get really complicated when an incoming storm threatens to up the stakes for everyone involved.

The middle act, in which Riddick hunts his prey without the need for much dialogue on Diesel’s part, is pretty damn fun. Diesel’s physical presence in the darkness has a great B-movie quality while Molla, Sackhoff, Bokeem Woodbine, and others nicely fill out the cast of his likely victims. This is clearly the movie David Twohy most wanted to make – the variation on the action of “Pitch Black” in which Riddick is both

friend and foe. He may kill half your crew but he’s also the only way you’re going to survive. This middle hour of the film connects in the way its creator intended and provides nice B-movie escapism.



Riddick
Photo credit: Universal Pictures

Sadly, the movie isn’t 60 minutes long. The opening act is nearly interminable – if it’s on cable, you’re likely to turn it off before it gets good – and merely sets up the hero worship of the piece. Riddick can face any challenge, overcome any obstacle, and stand on a mountain nude at interstellar sunset. It’s really a weird opening act, that places Riddick on far too high a pedestal for the rest of the film to match, especially since Diesel isn’t as charismatic as he was in the 2000 film, in which he was a wild card and not a Christ figure. And the final act amplifies the film’s low budget in unfortunate ways.

However, once the film actually gathers its supporting cast, it delivers well enough for B-movie, early-September escapism. Twohy is quite good at these scenes of danger in the sci-fi darkness, and he directs his ragtag crew of red shirts in a way that makes them more charismatic and engaging than most similar films. I’m not too convinced by Nable (and the math behind how his character relates to “Pitch” requires some odd suspension of disbelief) but Sackhoff, Woodbine, and Molla are thoroughly entertaining. And Twohy balances the pace of this mid-section perfectly. A little bit of dialogue, a little bit of Riddick in the darkness, a little bit of gore – it’s what you want from a sci-fi B movie. I just wish it was more consistent throughout. There’s a pretty damn good piece of entertainment buried in “Riddick” if you’re willing to dig through the bloat to find it.

“Riddick” stars Vin Diesel, Jordi Molla, Matt Nable, Katee Sackhoff, Dave Bautista, Bokeem Woodbine, Raoul Trujillo, Conrad Pia, and Nolan Gerard Funk. It is rated R and was written and directed by David Twohy.



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