

'Avengers: Age of Ultron' More Exhausting Than Exhilarating

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on May 1, 2015 - 1:14am

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Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – “The Avengers: Age Of Ultron” is another overstuffed, action packed CGI addled slugfest from the Marvel Cinematic Universe. but the effects are exhausting instead of exhilarating. What has set the Avengers apart is the great interplay between the characters – and when the movie stops to take a breath, those relationships shine through. But too often Writer Director Joss Whedon’s quiet moments get pushed aside for another increasingly numbing destructive spectacle.

Trouble begins right away with The Avengers in mid mission taking down one of the last Hydra baddies. They trade quips like the gang from “Oceans 11,” but the effects surrounding them are just big, loud and ordinary.



A Group Portrait in 'Avengers, Age of Ultron'

Photo credit: Walt Disney Motion Picture Studios

Once they recover Loki's scepter – which contains one of the building blocks of the Marvel Universe – Tony Stark (Robert Downey Jr.) and Dr. David Banner (Mark Ruffalo) begin fiddling around with it. Stark, still scarred by the events of the first Avengers film, has a dream of creating artificial intelligence. He wants to create a kind of global shield to protect the earth so The Avengers can go on a permanent vacation.

But the resulting creation is Ultron, voiced by an auto-tuned James Spader, has a more homicidal take on the issue. Tony Stark wants to eliminate war, but Ultron's solution is that no people equals no war, so he sets out to wipe out the human race.

Ultron looks kind of cool, but he's not particularly memorable. Neither are the genetically modified twins (Aaron Taylor-Johnson and Elizabeth Olsen) who go from helping Ultron to joining forces against him. In this whole 2 hour, 30 minute blockbuster I don't recall one single inventive or memorable action set piece. Couple that with an unusually large role for the dullest Avenger of them all, Hawkeye (Jeremy Renner), and you've got a blockbuster where I honest to goodness was checking my watch halfway through the film.

The saving grace are The Avengers themselves. While I had just about reached my limit on Robert Downey Jr as Tony Stark after Iron Man 3, he's back to form here. Some of the pizzazz is gone, but he's still fun to watch. I haven't cared much for Thor in his stand alone movies, but he works much better as part of a team with others to balance him out. Amid these huge earth shattering effects, the best moments are the small ones with the team just hanging around and goofing off, trying to lift Thor's mighty hammer and so on.



Mark Ruffalo and Scarlett Johansson Are a Heroic Duo in 'Avengers, Age of Ultron'

Photo credit: Walt Disney Motion Picture Studios

The real stars this time around are both Mark Ruffalo's as David Banner/Hulk, and Chris Evans' Captain America – they represent the heart and soul of the series. Evans continues to find unlikely depths in the disillusioned unfrozen warrior who could just as easily been the series dumbest character. Ruffalo continues to put in fine work as the best Hulk yet, playing the character like an Alcoholic Anonymous member always wary of a relapse. There's the seeds of a love story between Banner and Black Widow (Scarlett Johansson) which is actually kind of sweet, as these two scarred warriors learn to embrace each other, faults and all.

I don't want to give anyone the wrong idea. The Avengers has not sunk into "Transformers" territory here, not by a long shot. But the plots of these movies are not the most interesting parts of them. And there's so much plot and world building, and setups for future films that the most interesting pieces often get shoved to the margins. This is a blockbuster that's supposed to go out with a bang, but winds up with only a moderate boom instead.

"Avengers: Age of Ultron" opens everywhere on May 1st, in 3D, IMAX and regular screenings. See local listings for 3D and IMAX theaters. Featuring Robert Downey Jr., Chris Hemsworth, Mark Ruffalo, Scarlett Johansson, Chris Evans, James Spader, Samuel L. Jackson, Elizabeth Olsen, Cobie Smulders, Anthony Mackie and Jeremy Renner. Written and directed by Joss Whedon. Rated "PG-13"



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Source URL (retrieved on *Apr 25 2024 - 8:18am*):

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