

‘Logan’ Bares Its Sharp Claws & Eviscerates Us Emotionally

Submitted by [JonHC](#) [1] on March 2, 2017 - 4:46am

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Rating: **4.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – There is a war raging in the comic book cinematic universe where filmmakers think that these kinds of films should embrace their over the top (verging on campy) nature while others think they should be darker and made deathly serious. “Logan” proves that they are both wrong as it strikes a balance between all of those elements while remaining true to the character.

I have always had an unreasonable affinity for the character of Logan/Wolverine. He embodies the rage inside all of us that we don’t have an outlet for in our “polite” and “civilized” society. The anger never ends up being plain anger; there is always a cause or reason for it. It is this sort of character complexity that makes “Logan” stand out from any other “Wolverine” or “X-Men” film. Slowly, Logan/Wolverine has been developed and defined, with each film chipping away at the complicated exterior. Screenwriters Scott Frank and Mark Bombback made a huge contribution to the film “The Wolverine,” where we see our hero explore more of his history and seeing how confronting old demons could shape his future. He is haunted by the death of someone he loved and was forced to kill. It made him question his mortality and purpose. We glimpse into a character full of pain and regret, and we witness him make the choice to continue fighting, not as The Wolverine, but as the man, Logan.



Hugh Jackman let's it all out in his swan song performance in ‘Logan’

Photo credit: 20th Century Fox

In “Logan,” we take a trip into a bleak future where only a handful of mutants exist, and an aging Logan is one of them. I want to say as little

as possible about the story because it is something best experienced and not read. Scott Frank and James Mangold continue their development of Logan, but this time showing us his current state and slowly explaining it as the film progresses. We get into his psyche and realize his motivations aren’t as transparent as they appear. There is a depth of sadness that Logan can’t help but where, and it all makes sense the more the gaps in between the previous film and this one are filled. The chemistry between Logan and Charles Xavier is profound and delightfully full of candor. Charles is ever the beacon of hope, regardless of how dire the situation is. The real emotional gut-punch in the story comes when Logan meets Laura/X-23 and they end up traveling together. Their interactions are the perfect balance of the teacher/student and father/daughter dynamic, even though their relationship is much more intricate than that. Watching their relationship grow on-screen is mostly poignant with hints of comedy to break the tense drama.

“Logan’s” true power lies in how effortlessly realistic it feels, channeling elements of a modern western while giving us enough tie-ins to the X-men universe to keep even the fanboys happy. Director James Mangold crafts this love letter to a character he has obviously grown attached to and understands intrinsically. With the great visual style (at least up to when it turned into a “Pacific Rim”-like CGI explosion) he delivered in “The Wolverine,” Mangold switches from a feudal Japan aesthetic and themes and channels the dark heroic elements of the lone ranger westerns. The best part about both of these genre choices is that they perfectly fit the character of Logan and his anti-hero/tragic hero origins. He has always been a lone wolf, but now we discover that it is much less by choice and more because of circumstance. We finally see that paradigm shift, first with Charles (in the form of a partner or companion) and then with Laura (in the role of guardian). You might think that because there is a little girl involved, the film might take a lighter tone, but you will be happily disappointed. The brutality and carnage are still in full view and serve as a great contrast to the message of humanity and mercy.



There might be some lessons Charles Xavier (Patrick Stewart) has yet to offer Logan (Hugh Jackman) in ‘Logan’

Photo credit: 20th Century Fox

Hugh Jackman’s portrayal of Wolverine/Logan has always been one of the best parts of the X-men films. In Logan, Jackman is finally able to show us his full range as his character becomes more emotionally complex. There is still enough gore and violence to satiate the staunchest Wolverine fan, but there’s also a bittersweet, complicated beauty surrounding it. If this is truly the last time we ever see Hugh Jackman as Wolverine, it is as fitting a good-bye as this much-loved character deserves. The same has to be said about Patrick Stewart’s reprisal of Charles Xavier, who finally gets to be pushed the character farther than we have seen him taken. Stewart has always embodied the calm and collected demeanor of Professor X, but we finally get to see him break loose as he channels a grandpa with dementia that still occasionally offers prophetic wisdom.

The entire film’s strength lies in the relationships, and none is more potent than the one between Logan and Laura. Laura, played by Dafne Keen, might be young, but she can emote with the best of them. Keen spends the majority of the film silent, but that doesn’t stop her from being able to communicate with every other character, sometimes with nothing more than a well-timed scowl. Jackman has always brought a natural ferocity to the role of Wolverine, but Keen more than holds her own and even matches (sometimes exceeds) Jackman’s seasoned intensity. Their effortless chemistry creates an unforgettable dual performance that can leave the audience terrified or empathetic or both simultaneously.



Laura (Dafne Keen) and Logan (Hugh Jackman) aren't on your typical road trip in 'Logan'

Photo credit: 20th Century Fox

It is hard to say goodbye to a character you grew up identifying with. "Logan" embodies the loving farewell that we all wish we could give to a loved one. With the respectful treatment of the character, it is impossible not to appreciate Mangold's near-perfect send-off to a character he clearly adores. Jackman makes his twilight ride into the X-men sunset a memorable one, and ultimately becomes part of a hopeful trend of comic book storytelling that we will see in future films. Sometimes the end is just the beginning of something else. Either way, all we have left to say is, "Thanks, Bub."

"Logan" opens everywhere on March 3rd. Featuring Hugh Jackman, Patrick Stewart, Dafne Keen, Stephen Merchant, Boyd Holbrook, Elizabeth Rodriguez and Richard E. Grant. Screenplay by Scott Frank and James Mangold. Directed by James Mangold. Rated "R"



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