

Spreading Comic Book Fatigue to Everyone, 'Venom' Poisons the Well

Submitted by [JonHC](#) [1] on October 5, 2018 - 5:20am

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Rating: **1.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – I was one of the last sentinels; a conscientious objector in the war against comic book films. The handful of these that come out yearly had yet to weigh heavy on my film soul, especially when so many of the newer ones creating unique experiences, like “Deadpool” and “Thor: Ragnarok”. Even DC films, in all their failure, are products of their time. “Venom” changed all that.

Comic book fatigue is real, but that weariness seemed to pass me by completely. Even the worst Marvel film is better than the best DC film, and both are so extremely different than these types of films that came out even a decade ago that you can find things to appreciate in their approach. Some are obviously learning from their mistakes faster than others, but then there are films like “Venom” that poison the well and threaten the future of other great stories being told.

The film opens with a spaceship cruising towards Earth in the vacuum of space. As it gets closer to the planet, it loses control and crash-lands in a field, releasing a menacing symbiote into the world. This is the perfect personification of this entire project. It feels like it was created in a space-like vacuum, devoid of any information or points of reference for comic book films made in the last 20 years. It enters the film atmosphere like an anachronism, something from a bygone era where these types of films were young, dumb, and full of fun. “Venom” would have been acceptable schlock 20 years ago, but now it is nothing more than a menacing franchise symbiote of a film akin to a fanboy parasite.



The only real relationship that matters in 'Venom'

Photo credit: Sony Pictures

With its many, many flaws, the film at least delivers joy from where the film's title promises. The only enjoyable part is the character of Venom,

not to be confused with the other character Tom Hardy plays, Eddie Brock. Trying to channel the wonderful irreverence from comic book films like "Deadpool" and "Suicide Squad", "Venom" channels the success of the latter. It never really finds a consistent tone, leaving the film in a sort of unstable mess, much like the symbiotes. With four screenplay writers, it definitely becomes a too-many-cooks situation, each seemingly working on a different part of a recipe without knowing what the final product should look like.

The story seems to be haphazardly pieced together, revealing every seam to be a canyon of missing exposition. Each character's motivation can be summed up with single words, keeping them from ever achieving anything close to depth. The romantic angle is completely lost when the relationship feels rushed and disposable. The only relationship that even comes close to being of any significance is the one between Eddie Brock and Venom, and even that one doesn't make sense. As you watch the film, you can't help but feel like major pieces were cut out or omitted. Conversations that never happened. Bonds that we never saw formed. Partnerships that are built on mutual understanding and trust, but none of which we witnessed the development of on-screen. From beginning to end, "Venom" feels like we're transported from point A to point C, leaving point B on some cutting room floor somewhere.



Tom Hardy and Michelle Williams in 'Venom'

Photo credit: Sony Pictures

The only part of "Venom" that isn't toxic is the humorous interaction between Brock and Venom. Their 21st century Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis schtick is great for laughs but so sparse that you wish the film had fully committed to an all-comedy approach instead of whatever it was that they were really trying for. It is no surprise that the comedy is the most successful aspect when director Ruben Fleischer has built his career on irreverent comedies like "Zombieland". Even then, the comedic clash for bodily control between Brock and Venom can only take the film so far, especially since a similar premise was done exponentially better this year in "Upgrade".

Even with passable CGI, mildly entertaining comicality, and a predictably cheesy, yet somewhat satisfying mid-credit sequence announcing a potential sequel, "Venom" feels like a franchise vehicle without a driver. Perhaps the bar for these types of films has risen too high, but for the first time in my almost 30 years on Earth I'm left wondering, "Maybe there are too many comic book films being made."

"Venom" opens everywhere on October 5th. Featuring Tom Hardy, Michelle Williams, Riz Ahmed, Jenny Slate, Woody Harrelson, and Reid Scott. Directed by Ruben Fleischer. Written by Jeff Pinkner, Scott Rosenberg, and Kelly Marcel. Rated "PG-13"



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