

## Hugh Jackman Rocks in ‘X-Men Origins: Wolverine,’ But Movie Falters

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on May 1, 2009 - 11:57am

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Rating: **2.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – How did Wolverine get to Northern Alberta, Canada, where he makes his first appearance in a bar cage match in [Bryan Singer](#) [15]’s “[X-Men](#) [16]”? And what about all those flashbacks to his dark past and the experiments that turned him into a legend? “[X-Men Origins: Wolverine](#) [17]” with [Hugh Jackman](#) [18] attempts to answer those questions and more but proves that perhaps some mysteries are better left unsolved.

The first big summer movie of 2009 has all of the ingredients of a buzz-worthy blockbuster - star power, a brand name, major CGI effects, a marketing budget that end world poverty, tie-in toys and games, etc. So why does the final film feel so anticlimactic?



Hugh Jackman reprises the role that made him a superstar, as the fierce fighting machine Wolverine, who possesses amazing healing powers, adamantium claws, and a primal fury known as berserker rage.

*Photo credit: Fox/James Fisher*

Before I get too far, I should be blunt - “X-Men Origins: Wolverine” is not that bad. But it’s also not good. It’s one of the most balanced-out, down-the-middle, apathetic shrugs of a summer tentpole that I’ve seen in the many years that I’ve been following the summer blockbuster. There’s just no life to it, no creative energy in either a positive or negative direction. The best word to describe Gavin Hood’s action film is unremarkable, negatively or positively. By the time “Star Trek” lands in seven days, most people will have forgotten this film even exists.

The shockingly methodical and by-the-numbers screenplay by David Benioff and Skip Woods opens over a hundred years ago, where we meet the boys who would become Logan/Wolverine (Hugh Jackman) and Victor/Sabretooth ([Liev Schreiber](#) [19]). Remember the Victor Creed who worked with Magneto in Singer’s first film? Yeah, forget that. The character and history have been reimagined from both that film and the



comics, turning the two legendary characters into brothers.

Logan and Victor are vicious soldiers but the latter goes too far, clearly letting his animal bloodlust take control. When a firing squad proves useless against the mutants, William Stryker (Danny Huston) recruits them for a team of deadly mercenaries including Agent Zero (Daniel Henney), Bolt (Dominic Monaghan), John Wraith (Will.i.am), the man who would become The Blob (Kevin Durand), and the legendary Deadpool (Ryan Reynolds).

Stryker's team is in search of Adamantium, the substance that even casual Marvel fans knows will eventually be a key to Wolverine's powers. Things get intense and Logan runs for the Rocky Mountains, where the film finds him in domestic bliss six years later with his girl (Lynn Collins) and a nice lumberjack gig. Wolverine learns that his former team is being hunted down like animals and soon his past comes to his front door, forcing him back into action and to deal with the animal side of his personality.



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*Photo credit: Fox/James Fisher*

There are certainly a lot of answers in "Origins". Young fans will love just finding out how Logan got his cool name, where his Adamantium bone structure comes from, why he doesn't remember anything about his origin, and more. But it all feels too easy. Yes, the actual gaps are filled in but the character's blend of toughness and humanity that is on display in just the first few scenes of Singer's "X-Men" is never clarified by this film.

Why? Because this is slick entertainment. "Origins" is never dirty, dark, gritty, violent, sexual, or 'anything' enough. I longed for even a stand-out line or a character twist that I didn't see coming a mile away. It feels like the safe, easy way to appeal to the masses when it comes to the origin of their character. Take no risks and you won't anger your fans. Of course, no risks means no rewards.

The opportunity to write an edgy back story for what is a very, very dark character in the Marvel Universe has essentially been turned into family friendly fare. Even the production feels safe. The artistic design is horrendous, featuring sets that look like back lots. When they go to get Gambit (Taylor Kitsch) in New Orleans, it looks less believable than a sitcom version of the legendary city.

Even the dialogue sounds written by a machine. Logan/Wolverine is a funny character. There are no memorable lines in "Origins". If I heard someone talk about their "animal side" one more time, I was going to unleash my berserker rage.

I know, I know - it's JUST a superhero movie, right? That argument no longer holds water. You could go all the way to the top and look at the believable world and the grit of "The Dark Knight" to see why but you need only look at Singer's "X-Men" films, both of which were far more unpredictable and interesting than "Origins".





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With all of the criticism, why not completely ignore “X-Men Origins: Wolverine”? There are a few things about it that work. No one can lodge any complaints at Jackman, who wears this part like a second skin by now. He’s so comfortable and charismatic that he rescues the film from complete disaster on more than one occasion. Even better is Liev Schreiber as his brother, the only character who feels like he has any dirt under his fingernails. Schreiber has been doing great work for years and his casting was the best decision made in pre-production on the entire film.

I also have to give Hood credit for choreographing action sequences better than I thought he would. There are a few fights, including a climactic one between three legendary Marvel characters, that are interesting and entertaining to watch. And the film is well-paced. I was never bored. I was just never that interested either. And shouldn’t the first big summer movie warrant higher praise than “not boring”?

“Iron Man” and “The Dark Knight” set a high bar last summer. “X-Men Origins: Wolverine” doesn’t even come close to jumping over it.

*‘X-Men Origins: Wolverine’ stars Hugh Jackman, Ryan Reynolds, Liev Schreiber, Dominic Monaghan, Lynn Collins, Danny Huston, Daniel Henney, and Taylor Kitsch. It was written by David Benioff and Skip Woods and directed by Gavin Hood. It opens on May 1st, 2009. It is rated PG-13.*



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By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [21]

Content Director

HollywoodChicago.com

[brian@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com) [20]

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