

Horrendous 'After Earth' Insults Entire Planet

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on May 30, 2013 - 9:35am

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Rating: **1.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – The “sci” in M. Night Shyamalan’s sci-fi blockbuster “After Earth” clearly stands for Scientology and not science. There’s nothing remotely approaching honest science in this boring, preachy, horrendously made film that occasionally looks good but has nothing more worthwhile to say than a pamphlet trying to get you to convert to a cult. “*Danger is real. Fear is a choice.*” With more dialogue like that than actual plot or character, “After Earth” numbs the viewer into thinking it’s saying something deep when it’s really just a shallow, vanity project for the Smith family.

Will Smith, discarding so much of his likable charisma for an iron-jawed tough character that he really shouldn’t have played, stars as the hilariously named Cypher Raige, the toughest soldier in the universe. Raige is a legend among fellow Rangers for his “ghosting” ability. The human race was forced to leave Earth after, of course, we destroyed the planet. But humanity found itself the target of monstrous aliens called Ursas, who are blind but can smell your fear before they gut you. Raige has no fear. And so he is a ghost to the creatures that have hunted people and even killed his daughter Senshi (seen in flashbacks as Zoe Kravitz).



After Earth

Photo credit: Sony Pictures

Kitai Raige (Jaden Smith) wants to be just like the father that crippled veterans of the alien war salute and who forces his son to call him “Sir.” Kitai has been in ranger training but his Commander doesn’t graduate the young cadet to the next level, much to the adolescent’s dismay. Kitai hasn’t been able to deal with his own fear, seen racing ahead of his fellow cadets when he just needs to keep the pace, and crying when faced with fear. Of course, Kitai is about to be thrown out of the nest and forced to fly.

The Raige men are on a transport ship to another planet when they get caught in a horrendous meteor storm that could crash their vessel. They try to warp out of it and end up, randomly, in Earth’s orbit. The ship plummets to the Earth and tears apart. Of course, only Cypher and Kitai survive, although the old man breaks both his legs, leaving the boy to have to traverse the miles to the half of the ship that contains a

beacon for others to find them. Oh, did I mention the ship was carrying an Ursa for "training purposes"? Yes, we're supposed to believe that a creature that has wiped out much of the human race is kept alive and used to train others. Leave your disbelief at the door.



After Earth

Photo credit: Sony Pictures

As Cypher tells his son, everything on Earth has adapted to kill humans. Why the animals of Earth all have human bloodlust given the fact that the air there has been unable to support homo sapiens life is never explained (and it's clearly not all life as Kitai sees birds and tons of flora and fauna in the very first scene...just scary, fanged life). And rather than set the film on a dangerous planet that we were forced to leave behind and just leave it at that, writers Gary Whitta & M. Night Shyamalan (working from a story by Will Smith) are forced to bring a CGI creation in the form of the mysterious Ursa to chase Kitai along his journey.

It's only one of several decisions that make no sense. Where do we begin? The CGI monkey chase scene? There's nothing effective about CGI monkeys. The accents? They sound vaguely British, vaguely Indian, vaguely pretentious cult leader, and vaguely made-up, and will be mocked for decades, long after the film's been forgotten ("The accents were silly but at least they weren't as bad as "After Earth"). But I could give the speech patterns a pass if they were saying anything of interest. When the script for "After Earth" isn't falling to typical coming-of-age sci-fi cliché, it is bombarding viewers with Scientology-centered teachings about fear that would make a ten-year-old cry uncle. So self-serious as to verge on parody, "After Earth" simply isn't fun. It's a chore.



After Earth

Photo credit: Sony Pictures

The slog through "After Earth" isn't helped by the fact that poor Jaden Smith has given his first disastrous performance. I don't think it's his fault as the young actor showed he inherited his dad's screen presence in "The Pursuit of Happyness" and "The Karate Kid" but the poor guy is not effective as a protagonist here. He's too broad in his emotions and not engaging as a lead. I blame Shyamalan, who once seemed so deft at directing children but has proven with the abysmal "The Last Airbender," and now this film, that he's lost that touch. His dad isn't much better, stuck in the crashed ship and left only to give words of wisdom and guidance as he deals with his own pain.

The Smiths aren't good and Shyamalan's direction is leaden, but it all comes back to that awful, awful script. "After Earth" is just silly. Whether it's the bizarre supposition that climate changes will happen so quickly in the future that areas of the Earth will go from tundra to rainforest in a matter of hours with no impact to the foliage (sorry if I just gave you science geeks a migraine) or the Dianetics-laden preaching that has about as much real-world weight as a 3AM infomercial, there's just nothing fun about "After Earth". I don't mind scripts that play silly (as someone must have known parts of this would with a character named Cypher Raige) in pursuit of B-movie escapism but there's NO WAY that the Smiths, who produced the film as well, see this as blockbuster entertainment. They set out to make a sci-fi film with the power to change the way you look at your fellow man. And they made one that just made me want to leave this planet that much sooner.

"After Earth" stars Will Smith, Jaden Smith, Sophie Okonedo, and Zoe Kravitz. It was written by Gary Whitta and M. Night Shyamalan and directed by Shyamalan. It will be released on May 31, 2013.



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