

'Jupiter Ascending' Might Cause Attention Descending

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on February 5, 2015 - 5:07pm

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Rating: **2.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – “Jupiter Ascending” is certainly one of the oddest and densest of sci-fi movies, this side of “Dune,” and has some of the most laughable acting and dialogue seen in a major film in awhile. But the worst offense is that the film is dull, and practically without emotion or human empathy.

There is one major current Oscar nominee in the film – Eddie Redmayne – and fellow cast member Channing Tatum is also in the Best Picture nominated “Foxcatcher.” There might be a “Norbit Effect” (the horrible film starring Eddie Murphy, that was released the month he was favored to win Best Supporting Actor for “Dreamgirls,” which has been attributed to his loss of the trophy) for Redmayne, as the character “Balem Abrasax,” which nicely can be described as an “eccentric performance.” Not that anybody else survives the wooden script by Andy and Lana Wachowski (the “Matrix” series), and in addition Mila Kunis portrays a toilet scrubber, as she did in last year’s “Third Person.” It all adds up as mishmash of non-comprehensive moviemaking, both in form and execution, with some showy partially-set-in-Chicago special effects.

Mila Kunis is Jupiter Jones, a Russian emigrant who cleans toilets for a living (as a montage shows us). For some inexplicable reason she is a descendant of the Queen of the Universe, which is ruled in space by a family resembling the Greek Gods. The two brothers are Balem (Eddie Redmayne) and Titus (Douglas Booth), and they vie for the capture of Jupiter’s soul.



Caine (Channing Tatum) and the Title Character (Mila Kunis) in 'Jupiter Ascending'

Photo credit: Warner Bros.

Luckily, there is a genetically engineered warrior name Caine Wise (Channing Tatum), who is programmed? predisposed? to protect Jupiter, and the stand off becomes between him and the brothers. Through many worlds, spaceships, a destructive fight over modern day Chicago and Channing Tatum's dog roots, Ms. Jupiter just might be the key to saving the Earth and the Universe.

This is one of those "many explanations" sci-fi flicks, where the action stops so the characters can give a lecture about what is going on, but in "Jupiter Ascending" WE STILL DON'T KNOW what's going on. Like a comic book trying to sell a new superhero, there is a new power or territorial premise every 15 minutes in this film. For example, bees love Jupiter, which is suppose to mean that she is a Queen of the Universe. That explanation is hilarious, and it did give the special effects team the opportunity to create "background bees."

The sibling filmmakers – Andy and Lana Wachowski – has lost a step or two in creating original material. In the bloated story, the alien beings have the laziest names, like Titus, Stinger (the bee keeper), Gemma, Greeghan, Phylo and Ibis – ripping off Greek mythology. They also seemed incapable of providing some real human emotions for their characters, and that results in some deadly dull interactions and false love connections. The Wachowski record since the "Matrix" series – "Speed Racer" and "Cloud Atlas" – were mostly noted for their overreach. "Jupiter Ascending" is in overreach overdrive.

The special effects are only interesting when set against the modern day skyline of Chicago (the Wachowski's headquarters). Caine Wise (giggle) skates on his anti-gravity boots over the city as if he's a roller blader in Lincoln Park. But not to worry, through some hypnotic power the Windy City doesn't remember a crazy alien starship battle that occurs over it. The buildings reassemble, and those who do remember are dismissed as loons. How convenient. The rest of the FX is set in outer space, and the production design is overwrought and fashioned to mostly blow up real good.



I WILL WIN THE OSCAR!: Eddie Redmayne as Baleem in 'Jupiter Ascending'

Photo credit: Warner Bros.

And one thing I'll never understand in epic sci-fi like this, when a "chosen one" is plucked out of everyday obscurity into a new realm of being (Queen of the Universe), that they don't just scream their heads off for hours, as if in an asylum. The calm reaction of Jupiter to her fate is good for several laughs, along with Oscar nominee Eddie Redmayne's "Peter O'Toole's School of Acting" performance as Baleem. First talk real softly...THEN SHOUT REALLY LOUD! It's better comedy than "The Wedding Ringer."

This might be renamed, "Jupiter Con-descending," for the way it treats the audience and science fiction storytelling. It is half-wit puns like that which keep me in a rubber screening room, screaming at the top of my lungs.

"Jupiter Ascending" opens everywhere on February 6th. Featuring Channing Tatum, Mila Kunis, Eddie Redmayne, Sean Bean, Tuppence Middleton, Douglas Booth and Gugu Mbatha-Raw. Written and directed by Andy and Lana Wachowski. Rated "PG-13"



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