

Excess & Dwayne Johnson is How 'Skyscraper' Works

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on July 13, 2018 - 4:02pm

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Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – The Dwayne Johnson formula is what it is, as it seems for about three to five films a year. A disaster strikes, but the Johnson character has loved ones among the victims, and in his background (military, police, mercenary) there is enough expertise to rescue them. "Skyscraper" is the latest.

"Skyscraper" had to be the easiest "elevator pitch" in film history... "Die Hard" meets "The Towering Inferno." In this one, Johnson is ex-FBI and a security expert for the tallest building in the world... in Hong Kong. So when a fire gets lit in that high tower, and Johnson's family is trapped inside, well, the rest of it becomes the formula. It still works, in a "B" movie kind of way, because even though the formula is in place, it's always weirdly fascinating as to how it's going to work, and often it is Dwayne Johnson – and his inherent likability – that is the secret to the success. "Skyscraper" is a hot-popcorn-in-a-cold-theater summer escape.

The film starts with a flashback for Will Sawyer (Johnson) as he works as a hostage negotiator for the FBI. A suicide bomber explodes in front of him, and he partially loses a leg. Flashing forward several years later, Sawyer has recovered, and his fledgling security consulting gets a boost from his old colleague Ben (Pablo Schreiber). Security needs to be analyzed, and Sawyer gets the contract for the tallest building in the world, "The Pearl," built by billionaire Zhao Long Ji (Chin Han).



Hanging On: Will Sawyer (Dwayne Johnson) in 'Skyscraper'

Photo credit: Universal Pictures

Even though the residence part of the tower hasn't opened, Sawyer's wife Sarah (Neve Campbell) and children (McKenna Roberts and Noah Cottrell) are living there while Sawyer does his pitch. It turns out Ben is using Sawyer as a pawn to infiltrate the computerized security system, for a crime boss named Botha (Roland Moller). The torch is lit in the residential towers, and the Skyscraper starts to burn-baby-burn. Only Will Sawyer has the knowledge to save his family and the day.

As long as there are megabytes in the special effects computers, films that were once dismissed as "drive in films" are now mainstream popcorn movies with a \$125 million dollar budget. There is the basic evil versus good plot, but in this case the "good" might turn out to be the "evil," if enough motivation is presented... much like a mindless movie can be made noble if a family rescue is involved. Put it in a blender, and pulverize it all together.

Johnson is his usual heroic persona, but the twist is he has only one leg to stand on. This character quirk allows for some odd scenes – he used his prosthetic leg as a brace, a weapon and to walk/run – and adds in many uses and jokes about Duct Tape. All this stuff is designed to show Johnson's against-the-odds-everyman savior, but also serves as a massive and sometimes hilarious break from the laws of physics and gravity. But aren't those just what superhero movies are?



Burning Love: Sarah (Neve Campbell) and Will Fight to Survive in 'Skyscraper'
Photo credit: Universal Pictures

Also weird is the addition of Noah Taylor, who portrays an inside man on the billionaire's security staff, working for Botha, and his read as a mustache-twirling bureaucrat added a bit of necessary spice to the usual henchman. And writer/director Rawson Marshall Thurber wasn't above stealing from Orson Welles, as a high-tech house of mirrors in "Skyscraper" serves the same purpose as the similar scene in the Welles-directed "Lady from Shanghai." Mr. Welles adapted that film by stealing the title of a pulp fiction novel, which comes back to "Skyscraper" as a "Pulp Movie" that rips off Welles. Discuss that at your next film club meeting.

But this time of year is designed not to think, but to be. Dwayne Johnson is The King of those types of films, and love live The King. Is it possible to escape, and consciously float downstream while watching a Skyscraper burn? It's summer, baby.

"Skyscraper" opens everywhere in regular and 3D/IMAX on July 13th. See local listings for 3D/IMAX theaters and show times. Featuring Dwayne Johnson, Neve Campbell, Pablo Schreiber, Chin Han, Noah Taylor, McKenna Roberts, Noah Cottrell and Roland Moller. Written and directed by Rawson Marshall Thurber. Rated "PG-13"



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