

A weak 'Justice League' offers few laughs, lots of CGI

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Rating: «« out of «««««

Running Time: 121 min.

Over the past four years, DC has pushed to create a grand cinematic universe, equivalent to the one created by its contemporary (and competitor) Marvel. It's fair to say that while their latest attempts have resulted in box office success, the quality of the films has been uneven. *Justice League*

is a team-up film along the lines of *The Avengers*

, introducing and uniting several of the biggest characters in comics. This reviewer can report that the latest effort is slightly better than the previous Batman/Superman entry. However, it still manages to do more wrong than it does right.

Several months after the death of Superman (Henry Cavill), the world is in mourning. When Bruce Wayne, aka Batman (Ben Affleck), encounters an evil minion known as a Parademon, he becomes concerned. Wayne sets out to form a Justice League to combat the new threat that includes Wonder Woman (Gal Gadot), The Flash (Ezra Miller), Cyborg (Ray Fisher) and Aquaman (Jason Momoa). Together, they square off against an otherworldly foe named Steppenwolf (Ciarán Hinds). The villain announces his intention to locate three powerful Mother Boxes hidden on Earth and combine them into an Uberbox of sorts, which will cause a kind of Hell on Earth. Don't ask for specifics about why these world-destroying items were created in the first place, the explanation is vague.

As with the earlier episode, this tale begins with a heavy, somber and overly serious tone. There's a gray and colorless hue to the look of the film as well. The cast also has very little in the way of zippy material to help elevate the mood. Much of the dialogue is flat and the

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performances come across as incredibly stiff. A few throwaway lines earn a minor chuckle here and there, but anytime the characters are forced to talk about grave issues and personal trials, it's hollow, stilted, and at times even wince-inducing.

The action itself is handled reasonably enough, although it is showcased using an overload of CGI effects that look less than photorealistic. And there are some other oddities about these sequences. There's a showdown between several characters at a park in the middle of a city, with the superheroes using their remarkable powers to fight (and even do some property damage). Yet while all of this is happening, not a single metropolitan citizen is visible rubbernecking at the action. It's rather stunning that no one would notice what was going on.

We don't get to know a whole lot about the generic CGI super-villain either, which makes him a less than dynamic foe. The climax involves Steppenwolf taking control of an old, vacated Russian nuclear reactor and using it as his home base. We are told that the lives of many unfortunate residents in the Chernobyl-like area are in immediate danger, yet we only see a single family of four over the entire course of events. As the movie progresses to its climax, there's a distinct lack of, well, people... which is strange for a movie about saving humanity and the planet. In fact, it doesn't seem like anyone outside the core group of heroes actually knows that there's any threat at all. Again, this drains stakes and suspense from the proceedings.

On the plus side, there is more of an attempt at humor in the latter stages of the film when the characters unite to fight against evil. The script attempts to use The Flash as comic relief, and while several one-liners are ineffectual, a few minor quips do work. The most effective moment in the entire movie is a confession from Aquaman that ends with a funny reveal. It's the one gag that actually lands perfectly and earns a big laugh. Hopefully this marks the beginnings of an attempt to steer away from the drabness of many of these features.

Still, the current situation is poor overall. Perhaps most shockingly, the movie cost \$300 million dollars and is the second most expensive film ever produced. You'd never guess it to look at it. Sadly, *Justice League* is a busy, dull and largely ineffective film. Despite all of the talent, effort and famous characters involved, the quality of this feature and its larger series still isn't anywhere close to being in the same league as its superhero competitors.

Note: If you do end up giving it a try, (and make it through the whole thing), there is a post-credits scene setting up a future movie.

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