

Ant-Man and the Wasp lacks a powerful sting

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

Running Time: 125 minutes

Yep, this week I'm going to be Mr. Grumpy about the latest chapter in the Marvel Universe, *Ant-Man and the Wasp*. The movie certainly provides all the comic book movie story beats and action you'd expect, but the material isn't nearly as sharp this time out. Thankfully, the talented cast of this superhero feature manage to eke out a few laughs almost purely on charm. However, there isn't a whole lot else to recommend about this clumsy and haphazard sequel.

Set before the events of *Avengers: Infinity War*, Scott Lang aka Ant-Man (Paul Rudd) is about to finish a house arrest sentence after causing a big ruckus in the last

Captain America

movie. Estranged from scientists-turned-fugitives Dr. Hank Pym (Michael Douglas) and daughter Hope Van Dyne (Evangeline Lilly), the trio are forced back together when Lang begins having visions of Pym's wife, Janet (Michelle Pfeiffer). Pym and Hope believe that she may be trying to communicate from the Quantum Realm, an alternate dimension in time and space where she was lost years earlier. The team decide to find her, but their valuable technology is stolen by Ghost (Hannah John-Kamen), a dangerous figure who can phase through matter.

There's an awful lot to juggle here and my synopsis doesn't even come close to covering the incidental characters. They include a sinister black market dealer (Walter Goggins), Pym's adversarial ex-friend/professor (Lawrence Fishburne), Lang's familial relationships and an FBI agent (Randall Park) determined to catch the lead breaking his parole, not to mention the protagonist's ex-criminal buddies like Luis (Michael Pena). All of this extraneous material bogs

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things down a bit. No wonder five different writers are credited with the screenplay. It's a bit of a dog's breakfast.

Another factor that stood out was the broad approach to humor. There isn't as much wit or zip to the interplay. Early on, it is funny to watch a bored Lang try to pass time while under house arrest. Later in the film, a truth serum (of sorts) is introduced, leading to argument about what exactly it is; this also results in an amusing flashback narrated by Luis. So, the charismatic cast do earn a few laughs. Still, much of a film deals in bad puns, awkward one-liners and less-than-hilarious gags, like an ant grown to the size of a human being and eventually cleaning and playing video games.

As expected, the digital effects work is impressive and the concept itself should allow plenty of opportunity to experience familiar things from a completely different perspective. Yet these opportunities are also wasted. The camera simply follows the characters as they shrink and then expand to avoid capture. Little toy cars (carried around in a Hot Wheels case) are used in the streets and even Pym's lab building is shrunk, carried around and then expanded back to regular size in empty lots in downtown San Francisco.

I'm not sure how someone wouldn't notice a brand new building next to them or pay no mind to gunfights and car chases occurring through the downtown area, but logic isn't this film's strong suit. This may sound harsh, but when you can't help but think about these things as events unfold, it isn't a great sign.

The film is genial enough popcorn entertainment, but doesn't tell a story that takes advantage of the unique scenarios that could occur to a person with such unusual abilities. It's too busy trying to deliver big action and thrills than do something unique, like turn small, familiar environments into massive and dangerous arenas.

And for those wondering, there are two post-credits scenes, one of which depicts what happened to Lang after the arrival of Thanos. However, there isn't much sting to the proceedings in general. I'm sure I'll be in the minority on this one, but there is little going on in *Ant-Man and the Wasp* that will stick in the mind after the credits start rolling.

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