

ANT-MAN Succeeds, But Also Suffers From a Few Tics

Written by by Glenn Kay
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Rating: «« and 1/2 out of 4

Running Time: 116 min.

Well, comic book enthusiasts, yet another Marvel Universe character has made the leap to the big screen. The superhero developed this time out is a somewhat surprising selection, with the film taking a more comedic tone than its predecessors. Ant-man is a decent effort that benefits greatly from a charismatic lead and good cast, although it doesn't come without a few irritating tics.

Scott Lang (Paul Rudd) is a thief and ex-con who wants to go straight and provide financial support for his estranged family. Yet, with a criminal record he finds it almost impossible to hold onto a job, and is lured back into burglary by his good-natured but slow-witted criminal pal, Luis (Michael Pena). Thankfully, the brilliant and wealthy scientist Dr. Hank Pym (Michael Douglas) has already taken notice of Scott's specific skills.

The retired Pym and his daughter Hope (Evangeline Lilly) recruit Lang to wear a secret suit that can not only shrink him to the size of an ant, but give him superhuman powers. With the knowledge that current Pym Technologies President Darren Cross (Corey Stoll) is working on a military version of the same shrinking apparatus, our hero is tasked with breaking in and preventing it from being developed and sold.

In truth, it's a lean plot. And yet, it seems almost overcomplicated in its development. This is a two hour film, with the first half introducing the numerous characters (we haven't even gotten into the details with Lang's daughter, his ex-wife, her new cop husband and the many other

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crooked but pleasant friends of Luis) and the conflict between them all, not to mention explaining the details of Pym Technologies and its research. There are also a few running gags and subplots (including a friendly relationship between man and flying insect) that don't seem to come full circle, either.

It's quite talky and as written, often comes across as generic in approach. One would have hoped for a little more wit (or at least some sort of edge) from its characters. At times the humor comes off as too broad, resulting in a successful joke ratio that falls well below fifty percent. Thankfully, Rudd is amusing and engaging. Many of his dry comments do work and have an almost off-the-cuff feel to them. They could very well have been improvised on the spot, and if they weren't, all the more credit to the actor for selling them in a naturalistic manner.

There are a few impressive visual sequences as Lang wears the suit and is able to jump back and forth in size, disappearing and reappearing in various locales. Early on, there's an impressive scene involving a bathtub with running water, gushing like rapids and hurtling the character around in its current. The movie could have done with much more of this. There are training montages and a fist fight or two using the special costume, but the script doesn't really go to town with its premise until the final act.

And as the miniature action goes, the climax is the strongest aspect. While the stakes are high, Lang fights the forces of evil on a very small scale, resulting in some big laughs (particularly a daring face-off on a Thomas the Train set). Characters are shrunk to even more microscopic sizes and other miniature items and life forms are blown up to exaggerated states, resulting in some great images. In all, the finale really is a lot of fun to watch.

So while the movie is awkward and uneven, when it takes full advantage of Rudd and the story's eccentric peculiarities, it is enjoyable. *Ant-man* isn't among the best or most memorable films in Marvel catalog, but it's an agreeable enough introduction to another new superhero.