

'Star Trek Beyond' isn't deep, but it provides plenty of thrills

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Rating: ««« out of 4 stars

Running Time: 122 min.

It's amazing to think about, but this week marks the latest film entry in the *Star Trek* series, specifically, the 13th

feature. While that number may be considered unlucky to some, this chapter escapes the curse relatively unscathed. Although

Star Trek Beyond

isn't nearly as deep as it thinks it is, the movie successfully provides a fun dose of summer action and high adventure. In fact, it's considerably more entertaining than the previous installment.

As the story begins, Captain Kirk (Chris Pine) is beginning to find the routine of space exploration a bit too familiar, to the point where he becomes concerned about his direction and meaning... it's about as close as the latest incarnation of the character has come to having an existential crisis. These ruminations don't last long, as the Enterprise responds to a distress call and soon comes under attack. After a devastating battle with the nasty Krall (Idris Elba), the crew finds itself stranded and separated on an unforgiving, rocky planet.

The space mêlée early on is perhaps the best action sequence in the movie. In it, the crew struggles to defend against an imposing enemy that devastates by swarming the Enterprise with beehive-like coordination. This section does a great deal to put the leads out of their element and up against difficult odds. There's great danger, drama, and tension as the ship is boarded and bombarded, with some clever visuals that send the heroes sliding around the ship and spinning upside down as they fight off their attackers.

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The dialogue from writers Simon Pegg and Doug Jung helps tremendously. There’s great onscreen camaraderie between the heroes, resulting in plenty of laughs. The amusingly strained relationship between Spock (Zachary Quinto) and Doctor McCoy (Karl Urban) might be the most effective. It results in several funny barbs between the characters, particularly when the physician pokes fun at a gift the Vulcan has given to a significant other. There are also plenty of chuckles courtesy of the bewildered Scotty (Simon Pegg), as well as some sharp exchanges between Kirk and Chekov (Anton Yelchin). In the end, it’s the interplay and off-handed wit that really keeps viewers engaged.

When all is said and done, villain Krall’s motivation is actually incredibly simple. There’s some posturing and deep pondering from various characters about duty and the need to believe and trust in others. Still, these themes aren’t nearly as complex as some of the earlier movies in the series; some of which dealt head-on with difficult concepts like death, loss, and even religion.

The film does begin to get a bit shaggy toward the close. In fact, it seems as if the last 45 minutes are a continuous barrage of action scenes. It eventually veers into overkill as the confrontations move from a fight in a kind of a space quarry/crater, to a ship-to-ship battle to, well, more skirmishes in flight and further hand-to-hand conflict. At least they’re peppy and enjoyable to watch, even if the loud and grandiose explosions start to tire one out by the close.

Star Trek Beyond isn’t quite as thoughtful as you might have expected, but it still provides plenty of bang for the buck. In fact, one almost gets the impression that the intent this time out was to keep things simple and old-fashioned, presenting a concise, fast-paced and thrilling action flick. Ultimately, it delivers on this level. It may not be the greatest chapter, but the film definitely ranks in the upper half of series entries.

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