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The Incredible Hulk - DVD

The big green chap is back, again

by Neil Queen published on 10 October 2008

As comic-book adaptations continue to broaden their hold of the multiplexes and DVD racks with franchises steadily taking root, what becomes important is that they each establish a tone that prevents them from blurring into a primary-coloured spandex mush.

The Spider-Man films are distinguishable by their youthful and playful vigour, Batman by the gothic broodiness and Fantastic Four by their shoddiness. With Ang Lee sitting in the big chair for The Hulk, there was an attempt to make a more reflective entry, only to be met by great indifference.

Fingers burnt, Marvel did a U-ey and lured Louis Leterrier - he of *Transporter 2* fame and not much else - to zhuzsh things up a bit. Which would have been sound enough, had someone given headliner Edward Norton a heads-up. Supposedly keen to add his creative tuppenny's worth, he apparently dragged his heels, wanting it to veer away from the popcorn brigade and ironically back to Ang's weighty realm.

The Incredible Hulk starts promisingly - now a fugitive in Brazil, what with all the killing, destruction and US military pissing-off he managed last time out, Bruce Banner (Norton) seeks a quiet life to help control the beast within him. A crack team of soldiers, led by high-flying moustache General Thunderbolt Ross (William Hurt), all keen to get all shooty and capturey on him so they can use him to create an army of super soldiers doesn't come under that remit.

Blonsky (Tim Roth), the fightingest of Ross' men, takes exception to getting his arse handed to him by a not-so-jolly-green giant and agrees to get his DNA pimped with the same hit of gamma radiation that blighted Banner, so as to help bring down our green buddy. This sets up the major thread of the film, a big Hulk-off between two



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genetic freaks. Oh, and there's a love story in there, with Liv Tyler ticking that box as Betty Ross, a classic smart, sparky, Stan Lee female archetype.

The suggestion that Norton skewed the project may have some truth to it, but that would do a disservice to all the other people who worked so hard to make this a fiesta of averageness. He didn't write the script, which marries bluntness to a really hackneyed dialogue; he wasn't the one who failed to coax a good performance from anyone.

VERDICT

It's not a film that you won't derive joy from, there's enough spectacle and fireworks to pass 108 minutes of anyone's time and there are some canny cameos and gags (hey purists - the purple pants get a nod), it's just that overall it's a bit uninspired and lacking in creative flair. It feels little more than a collection of set-pieces with the story and characters serving only as string to link the battles.

Oh, and Norton wasn't responsible for Roth's accent either.

A blockbuster by numbers that does what it needs to without ever excelling, this is more of a non-event than a stinker. Give it a few weeks till Iron Man, Dark Knight and Hellboy II come along instead.

Rating: 12

Starring: Edward Norton, Tim Roth, Liv Tyler

Directed by: Louis Letterier

Extras: Commentaries, deleted scenes, making of, featurettes (Special edition)

At a glance

What is it?

Comic-book actioner

Good

Wonderful locations, beautifully shot

Bad

Proof that 1 plus 1 can sometimes equal 0 - a whole number of weak elements fail to amount to anything of note

Verdict

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Price 19.99 / £24.99 double-disc special edition
Blu-ray £24.99

Our score

5/10

Your score

?/10