

Iron Man - DVD

Something for the weekend?

by Neil Queen published on 24 October 2008

During this tricky period, where the gods of DVD release scheduling have set me on a comic-based review decathlon, I remarked that these films need to strive to create a distinct tone to prevent them from becoming a blur. While *The Incredible Hulk* didn't really hit that mark, in *Iron Man* we have a bang-on-the-money case of them getting it right. By contextualising *Iron Man* within current affairs, using a strong and more worldly cast and pushing away from the fantasy into slightly more techie realism, the film reaches towards a crowd that would be more comfortable with the *Bourne* films.

While in Afghanistan demonstrating his latest creation to the US military, genius arms manufacturer and ace warmonger Tony Stark (Downey Jr) is captured by Afghan rebels who demand he knock up a nice little mass-murdering missile or he himself buys the farm. Smart sod he is, he instead forges himself a crude armoured suit to ensure his escape.

Having along the way discovered that his weapons are falling into the wrong hands and causing human collateral damage, he then proposes his company shuts down its arms division, bringing him into conflict with mentor and Stark Industries boss Obadiah Stane (Jeff Bridges). Driven underground, Stark uses his armour template to create a battle suit which he uses to defend the innocent Afghan people against his rebel captors and just kinda right loadsa wrongs that he helped cause.

With Stane a scumbag who's selling to both sides of the war, he targets Stark's inventions for his own bad-ass purposes, forcing Stark to strike out in the name of all that is good (insert flowing stars and bars and heroic pose).

Exploring the current military landscape, this actually sticks to the classic good vs. evil axis that



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defines comic books, but the moral grey areas heightens them to a canny degree. A perfect blast of popcorn heaven, the kick-ass rampant dynamism of the action scenes are more than matched in other areas.

The casting of Downey Jr is sublime, his textured performance lends a depth to Stark that will become a model for all future castings, while his playful scenes with Paltrow's Pepper Potts recalls Iron Man director Jon Favreau's bantering with Vince Vaughn in *Swingers*. The references to the conflict could easily have been contrived, but are handled deftly enough, and on top of that, there's enough for comic geeks to riff on - oh, the sweetness of the use of the silver age costume!

VERDICT

Like *The Hulk*, the absence of a Joker-strength foe results in the unsatisfactory contrivance of a nemesis that drags the final third into slightly blander territory, but the explosive finale will ensure that few people other than me will be too bothered by this.

Cool as hell and more fun than watching your Spurs-supporting fans retreating into the foetal position, this is quality fare from top to bottom.

Rating: 15

Starring: Robert Downey Jr, Gwyneth Paltrow, Jeff Bridges, Terence Howard Directed by: Jon Favreau

Extras: deleted and extended scenes (standard disc) / production featurettes, Iron Man history, galleries, Downey Jr screen test (special edition)

At a glance

What is it?

Action adventure.

Good

Proof that comic films are following comic history and pushing for a smarter audience - setting us up ever so nicely for *Watchmen*

Bad

The need for an epic set-piece finale drags it into more conventional Hollywood fare

Verdict

A striking and smart take on the superhero genre that will appeal to geeks and non-believers alike

Price 19.99 / two-disc special edition &#pound;24.99 / Blu-ray &#pound;29.99

Our score

8/10

Your score

?/10