

Hancock - DVD

Superhero: straight-up, with a twist

by Neil Queen published on 28 November 2008

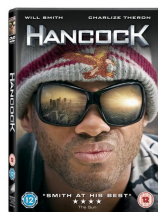
It's a difficult to not like Will Smith in some way or other. Supposedly the Nicest Guy in Hollywood, his amiability and thesby capability has made him a relatively safe pair of hands that can be entrusted with pretty much any kind of mainstream blockbuster. Problem is, his glass-half-full persona has led him down a path of increasing predictability, which is why Hancock could have been an intriguing IMDB entry for him.

Smith plays the titular hero, a mardy superhero whose pint glass is never less than half full. With lousy people skills and a sloppy and unrefined approach to the whole superhero role, Hancock finds himself on the wrong side of public favour, until a well-meaning spin doctor (eh?) played by Jason Bateman decides to make him his pet project and put Hancock back in everyone's good books - much to the annoyance of his curiously resistant wife, tidily played by Charlize Theron.

As Hancock battles prison, rehab, vengeful criminals and his own shrouded past, he goes on one of the good old rite de passages that is Hollywood's bread and butter.

The problem is that Hancock the film is riddled with too many flaws. Capitalising on the superhero trend may seem like shooting fish in a barrel, but superhero films that aren't based on comics are inherently screwed. As the current crop of franchises have decades of character development and storylines to draw upon, those that start from scratch inevitably feel empty and show the conceptual paucity - My Super Ex-Girlfiend, anyone?

Though Hancock's central idea of bucking the genre by making him a flawed and unlikeable bum is neat, Stan Lee spent the whole of the 60s creating characters in that way, plus Iron Man battled alcoholism back in the late-70s, so its sole selling point is already old. From a direction and



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script point of view, it's all over the shop, too. Unable to decide whether it's a comedy with darker moments or vice versa, it falls between two massive stools. Cutesy, yet potty-mouthed, it also can't decide whether it wishes to be Disney fodder like *The Pacifier* or grimmer like *Bad Santa*. Visually, it does a better job of appearing drunk than Smith does, inconsistently wavering as it does between CGI, shakey cam, ER-style quick-cuts and soft-focus dramatic moment.

VERDICT

None of this helps Smith, who drifts through the film, never quite stamping his authority on it, nor looking like he's having any fun with what could have been a fun character. Maybe he's never touched a drop of booze in his life - that may explain why he's such an unconvincing bum.

Entertaining enough and hitting all the fast-paced, ballistic spots required by a blockbuster, sadly it instead feels like a missed opportunity for Smith to shake off his Nice Guy shackles.

Rating: 12

Starring: Will Smith, Charlize Theron

Directed by: Peter Berg

Extras: Theatrical and unrated version (standard disc) / featurettes (special edition)

At a glance

What is it?

Knockabout superhero action

Good

Theron is solid enough, and if anybody knows the name of the track that plays when he rocks up to the nightclub, please let me know

Bad

The overall messiness of the production spoils what could have been a swell popcorn-muncher

Verdict

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Price 19.99 / 2-disc special edition &#pound;22.99 / blu-ray &#pound;24.99

Our score

6/10

Your score

?/10