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## Hellboy II: The Golden Army - DVD

Groovy movie or CGI overload?

by Neil Queen published on 5 December 2008

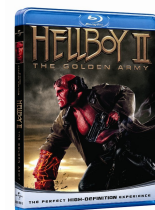
One of the more remarkable developments in pop culture over the past 20 or so years is how the gap between the mainstream and the fringes has closed and with it, the notion of independent cult culture, be it in cinema or music, has been redefined.

In terms of film, it's possibly since Tarantino put dirt under Hollywood's fingernails and into the box office top ten that they realised that their homogenised formula wasn't the only way forward. With the Internet ensuring that the obscure doesn't have to remain obscure, the major studios have taken more calculated risks, allowing more left-field directors to take the helm, when previously they'd have relied on a safer, blander pair of hands.

Where this leaves us is in a position where mainstream films now have a more intriguing, darker hue. Take the fantasy blockbuster, once the domain of Lucas and Spielberg - talented men, but classic and All-American in their approach. Now we're in the hands of men like Peter Jackson, Sam Raimi and Guillermo Del Toro, men who started in the murkier depths of the horror genre. Much to our benefit.

On the back of the much-lauded *Pan's Labyrinth*, Del Toro returns to the Hellboy franchise, and all the better for it. It's a remarkable spectacle, flashy, noisy, vibrant, outlandish, yet wildly entertaining, and with a real playful side.

Still a member of a shadowy government organisation that tackles and quashes supernatural and mythical disturbances, like *Ghostbusters* meets *X-Men* for a new generation, the narky Hellboy (Ron Perlman) faces up to the challenge of defeating an indestructible army of ancient killer machines, oddly led by an elven Luke Goss. Meantime, Del Toro lightens things up with plenty of inter-species love interest which draws



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in a slightly underutilised Selma Blair as the big red guy's gal Liz.

The collaboration between the gothic fantasy of Del Toro and the oddball worldview of Hellboy creator is a perfect blend of rampaging visions, though the director's taste seems to win out - it's an incredibly fantastical affair, adeptly using CGI to create whole worlds of impressive beasts, I just pine slightly for the twisted mind of Mignola that gave us cinema's first ever clockwork gimp Nazi - it feels like the wonkiness is sacrificed for more Lord of the Rings grandeur.

## VERDICT

An astounding eye-buffet of special effects candy that will captivate without remorse, perhaps its only failing is putting all its eggs in the visual basket. While dry and full of engaging characters, we rarely go beyond the surface of any situation, and events whoosh past rollercoaster-style, and it all feels a little too cartoony to make any massive connection with.

Still, when smoke and mirrors is this dazzling and hypnotic, who's complaining?

Rating: 12

Starring: Ron Perlman, Selma Blair

Directed by: Guillermo Del Toro

Extras: commentaries, featurettes, comic, deleted scenes, gallery, easter egg

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## At a glance

### What is it?

Fantasy adventure

### Good

Your eyes will never stop thanking you for watching this

### Bad

The story, script and characters don't linger too long in your head once the final credits roll

### Verdict

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**Price** 22.99/Blu-ray & £24.99

**Our score**

7/10

**Your score**

?/10