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SERENITY

Movie Details

Post Author: Matt Ho August 6, 2013 0

OUR RATING 

DIRECTOR JOSS WHEDON

WRITER JOSS WHEDON

 4.5/5 2 votes

US BOX OFFICE \$25.5M

RUN TIME 1 HR. 59 MIN. **RATED** PG-13

YOUR RATING

GENRE ACTION, ADVENTURE, SCI FI

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STARS Adam Baldwin Alan Tudyk Chiwetel Ejiofor Gina Torres Jewel Staite Morena Baccarin Nathan Fillion
Ron Glass Sean Maher Summer Glau

SYNOPSIS

The crew of Serenity find themselves being hunted by a government agent known only as the Operative (Chiwetel Ejiofor), a man who will stop at nothing to recapture their psychic passenger River Tam (Summer Glau).

REVIEW

After the unceremonious cancellation of beloved sci-fi western *Firefly* in 2002, creator/director Joss Whedon swore he'd revive the cult-classic series in some shape or form. When several networks turned him down, he made a gutsy decision to sell it as a film and successfully grabbed Universal Pictures onboard for production. Three years later, Whedon made good on his promise and brought

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U.S Box Office

Weekend Box Office for 8/2/2013

2 Guns	\$27,059,130
The Wolverine	\$21,324,890
The Smurfs 2	\$17,548,389
The Conjuring	\$13,027,154
Despicable Me 2	\$10,134,120

Source: *The Numbers* - Movie Box Office

...related concerns for production. Three years later, Whedon made good on his promise and brought back Captain Malcolm Reynolds (Nathan Fillion) and his renegade crew, this time to the big screen.

Serenity takes place approximately six months after the show's final episode "Objects in Space." While River's back story was gradually being uncovered on TV, the unfortunate demise of *Firefly* never granted the audience any further details of the lab experiments done on her, or fully made sense of the triggers that drove her mental instability. The film answers all those questions and fleshes out major plot points that would've been the direction of season two. We finally learn the specifics of what the scientists were doing with River, and that one of the major reasons the Alliance desperately wants her back in custody is because she harbors a dirty government secret they want secured. We also discover how Simon (Sean Maher) successfully rescued her, as well as the origins of the feral cannibalistic Reavers who play a huge role in the film.

With the Alliance's relentless pursuit of River being the sole focus, at no point does it feel like Whedon is trying to compensate for a lost season by cramming everything he can into the film. This is a well-paced, tightly-written sci-fi flick that's funny, sad, and action-packed all at the same time. Whedon maintains the charm of *Firefly* with the same witty dialogue, but more importantly, the strong family dynamic between the lovable characters who stick together in spite of frequent conflicts that should've torn them apart numerous times.

The obvious problem with *Serenity* is that those who have never seen *Firefly* will feel lost. That being said, Whedon does do a solid job at introducing and reintroducing the world of the show, the history of the war that took place, and the main conflict within the first ten minutes for those walking in blind. Still, *Serenity* can't operate as a standalone film. To truly understand the characters, their relationships with one another and the narrative in full, you have to go through the entire series first.

I aim to misbehave. – Captain Malcolm Reynolds

Visually, the film is a major step-up from what was originally seen on TV. The sets, particularly the ship, definitely have a crisper presentation, but it does stay true to the look fans are familiar with. The effects, of course, have also been improved. Are they the best? No, but it's hardly something that matters in this case.

The performances will no doubt bring a smile to every fan's face. Though it has been three years, the



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entire cast reprises their respective roles as if they've never left, and their chemistry together is stronger than ever. Alan Tudyk is still lighthearted and humorous as Wash. Gina Torres continues to demonstrate the fierceness and loyalty of Zoe. Adam Baldwin is the same gritty, but funny meathead mercenary Jayne. Jewel Staite brings heart and innocence as the genius mechanic Kaylee. Maher is excellent portraying Simon as both the bright young doctor and the overprotective brother to Summer Glau's River. Glau herself recaptures her character's disjointed state of mind with the same dazed expressions, unpredictable behavior, and emotional outbursts perfectly. No longer is River's potential teased, as *Serenity* unleashes her abilities in full form, proving why she's one of the greatest, strongest female characters of all time.

Nathan Fillion as the one and only Captain Malcolm Reynolds is even more badass this time around. He is outstanding as the clever, quick-witted leader who makes all the tough decisions and a man willing to take a beating for his crew. He also delivers a great speech in the film that may go down as his finest moment.

With every great hero comes a great villain. In this case, it's underrated British actor Chiwetel Ejiofor (*Children of Men*, *American Gangster*) who plays the Operative. Though Richard Brooks as the bounty hunter Jubal Early served as a great antagonist in "Objects in Space", Ejiofor is absolutely chilling in his own way. He's creepily calm, highly intelligent, deadly in combat and dangerously delusional in his beliefs on what defines the greater good.

VERDICT

Serenity is the definition of a successful TV-to-movie adaptation and it's a true follow-up to *Firefly*, addressing all the questions that were originally raised during its short-lived run. You do have to watch the show in order to fully appreciate the story and the fantastic characters, but it's only 14 episodes and trust me when I say it's worth your time. Comics are optional unless you really want to bridge that six month gap between the last episode of the series and the start of the film.

The cast returns bigger, better and badder than ever on their best adventure yet. If this is the last we see of them, I'd be ok with Whedon leaving us on this high note.

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