

Captain America: The Right Kind of Hero

Not since the first *Spider-Man* hit the big screen had I been looking forward to catching a superhero at the cineplex as *Captain America* this summer.

After all, I remember as a small boy being hooked on the alter ego of Steve Rogers, a frail young man who was enhanced to the peak of human perfection by an experimental serum in order to aid the United States' World War II effort.

The character first appeared in a publication from Marvel Comics' 1940s predecessor, Timely Comics. Over the years, an estimated 210 million copies of "Captain America" comic books have been sold in a total of 75 countries. But as a kid, I just knew that *Captain America* wore a cool costume that bore an American flag motif, and was armed with an indestructible shield that can be thrown as a weapon.

It took 70 years for *Captain America* to hit the big screen in a big-budget way, and I can gladly say that it was worth the wait. I was excited when the DVD was recently released after *Captain America: The First Avenger* earned more than \$350 million at the global box office.

I might be partial, but I believe *Captain America* was saved as the best for last, as the final entry in Marvel's Avengers prequels. And I'm not alone as various critics have called it "the best superhero movie ever," "stylish and spectacular," "the best comic book movie of the summer" and *Captain America* is "better engineered and more entertaining than the "Iron Man" or "Spider-Man" or "Batman" films. It's a movie that makes you proud to be an American."

Directed by Joe Johnston, the visual effects art director on *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Captain America* has an *Indiana Jones*

movie feel, with its old-fashioned adventure and premise. The plot focuses on 90-pound weakling Steve Rogers (Chris Evans), who volunteers to participate in an experimental program that turns him into the super soldier known as Captain America. In an amazing piece of CGI, Evans' head is believably placed onto a scrawny body before his transformation to the buff star-spangled man.

As Captain America, Rogers joins forces with Bucky Barnes (Sebastian Stan), Col. Chester Phillips (Tommy Lee Jones), Dr. Abraham Erskine (Stanley Tucci), Howard Stark (Dominic Cooper) and Peggy Carter (Hayley Atwell) to fight the evil Johann Schmidt/the Red Skull (Hugo Weaving), head of the super-secret Hydra wing of the Nazi military complex who has a penchant for the occult like Hitler.

The spiffy wartime setting adds to the movie's *Raiders of the Lost Ark* look, as there are classic chase and shoot-out in a "Dick Tracy" version of New York, secret laboratories behind bookshelves, a mountainside fortress and links to the Marvel characters who'll assemble in next summer's *The Avengers*. There are also nods to *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Star Wars* and *Back to the Future*, which are pretty neat and well done—if you catch them.

The two-disc Blu-ray/DVD combo pack of *Captain America* includes more than an hour of behind-the-scenes bonus material including an original Marvel short film, a sneak peek into *The Avengers*, six featurettes that go behind-the-scenes of the filmmaking process, deleted scenes and more.

Although far from being a faith-based film, the movie echoes some biblical principles, including drawing strength from weakness, as well as humility. "The weak man knows the value of strength," Erskine tells Rogers. "And knows compassion." And before he is transformed into Capt. A, Steve is asked by Erskine to make a promise: "That you will stay who you are. Not a perfect soldier, but a good man."

One of the most patriotic superhero and anti-bully movies ever, *Captain America* is a solid, old-fashioned popcorn action-adventure flick, with a good message about a Good Samaritan with a good heart who overcomes evil with compassion and goodness. Now that's my idea of a good superhero.

Content Watch: Rated PG-13 for intense sequences of sci-fi violence and action, *Captain America: The First Avenger* features light comic book/war movie violence as most of those who die are disintegrated or just fall down. Although the violence is not as intense as the other Marvel offering from the summer, *Thor*, the movie could still be scary for small children. The Red Skull is no Freddy Krueger, but he and the light occult content could be too much for some kids. I watched the film with my three oldest boys, ages 10, 8 and 5 on Clearplay, which filters out most of the intense violence and all of the light obscenities. There are only a few swear words, and a guy moons Captain America but it's not shown. There are a few scenes where men are drinking.