

'Fantastic Four' Is Far From Fantastic

There is supposed to be strength in numbers—especially in the third film adaptation of Marvel's "First Family of Superheroes."

Fantastic Four is meant to reboot the superhero franchise for Fox or risk having the film rights revert back to Marvel. The early creation of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, *Fantastic Four* launched Marvel Comics in 1962.

A campy 1994 Roger Corman movie was never released. Fox then made two movies, released in 2005 and 2007, making \$330 million and \$289 million at the box office respectively, but were considered failures for not capturing moviegoers' imagination.

This third movie iteration was handed to director and co-writer Josh Trank, whose one previous feature was the 2012 "found-footage" thriller *Chronicle*, which was a surprised hit.

Casting Miles Teller (Reed Richards), Michael B. Jordan (Johnny Storm), Kate Mara (Sue Storm/ the Invisible Woman) and Jamie Bell (Ben Grimm/The Thing) as the four superheroes, Trank was charged with rebooting the franchise and giving it a fresh feel.

Unfortunately, it doesn't appear that the third time is the charm as the movie has garnered scathing reviews, including a dismal 9% critics' approval rating on *Rotten Tomatoes*. *Fantastic Four* reportedly cost \$120 million to produce and endured behind-the-scenes drama when reshoots were required amid unhappiness with Trank.

Mirroring the plot of the *Ultimate Fantastic Four* comic book,

the reboot finds Reed Richards, Johnny Storm and Ben Grimm teleporting into an alternate and dangerous world—called the N-Zone in the Marvel Universe—which gives them extraordinary abilities. Richards turns into the stretchable Mr. Fantastic, while Grimm morphs into the Thing, the team’s literal rock. Johnny becomes the highly flammable Human Torch, while his sister, Sue, becomes the Invisible Woman.

A fifth member of the team is Victor Dumashev (Toby Kebbell), who becomes the group’s foe when he turns into Dr. Doom—a multi-powered, brainiac supervillain behind a suit of armor.

“Human beings have an immeasurable desire to discover, to invent, to build,” Dr. Franklin Storm (Reg E. Cathey), the father of Johnny and Sue, tells the team regarding the need to find “the next evolution” of planet Earth. “Our future depends on us furthering these ideals, a responsibility that rests on the shoulders of generations to come. But with every new discovery, there is risk, there is sacrifice ... and there are consequences. ... With every new discovery, there is risk. But we are stronger together than we are apart.”

With their lives irrevocably upended with their new powers, the team must learn to harness their daunting abilities and work together to save earth from their former friend turned enemy.

Fantastic Four is not fantastic, but it’s a start—considering it’s an origin movie. It takes nearly an hour for the 100-minute movie to set up the storyline and for the characters’ super powers to kick in. The movie likely had to be done this way in order to set the stage for future installments—barring it doesn’t flop, which would null any sequels.

Fanboys will probably get all righteous and hate the movie, but regular moviegoers—people who don’t eat and breathe Marvel for breakfast—can still enjoy it. This movie is more of a contemporary look at the *Fantastic Four* versus the traditional

comic book fodder.

On the down side, the film has some non-family friendly graphic violence, along with a run-of-the-mill script and so-so computer-generated imagery plus a rushed and predictable climax.

Content Watch: *Fantastic Four* is rated PG-13 for sci-fi action violence and language. There are several profanities, plus a middle finger is used by one of the main characters. God's name is taken in vain a few times. *Fantastic Four* features a humanist worldview that leans towards a scientific philosophy favoring evolution. There are several frightening and intense scenes with graphic violence, including the villain using his superpowers to cause a few people's heads and bodies to explode, with blood shown—which is more akin to a horror movie. Dr. Doom's appearance and action might be a bit too frightening to children. It is revealed that the Thing got the phrase "It's clobbering time" from his older brother—every time he physically abused him. Characters are shown drinking and getting intoxicated. Because of the movie's gritty and dark tone, atypical for a Marvel Comic-based superhero flick, parents are encouraged to use strong discretion in allowing children under 13 watch the film.

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