

Gritty Violence Short-Circuits Dazzling 'Iron Man 3'

This won't be a popular opinion, but parents should exercise extreme caution in letting youngsters watch this very intense blockbuster superhero flick.

The third time's a harm, not charm, for *Iron Man 3* in terms of kid-friendliness, with its super-intense, violent elements.

The third installment of Marvel's metal man has been well received by critics so far, with many praising the movie's wit and sense of invention.

Sure, Iron Man Tony Stark (Robert Downey Jr.), the genius billionaire playboy-inventor, is still funny, with his goofy jokes and one-liners. Sure, the stunts and effects are eye-popping, if not the most epic in the Iron Man trilogy, including 13 people the superhero must rescue after they're sucked out of Air Force One.

But as one critic pointed out, *Iron Man 3* is "also far and away the most violent, with a *Die Hard* body count, bombs and bullets, and Tony Stark trash-talking evil henchmen about how he's going to kill them."

Indeed, writer-director Shane Black, who gained fame for writing the Lethal Weapon movies and directed Downey in *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*, threads on the territory of the bleak and gritty Dark Knight films.

The first film from Marvel since the \$2-billion worldwide success of last summer's *The Avengers*, *Iron Man 3* finds Tony Stark feeling less invincible. After rescuing the world from invading aliens, he struggles with bouts of insomnia and full-blown panic attacks.

"I'm Tony Stark," he quips. "I build neat stuff, got a great girl, occasionally save the world. So why can't I sleep?"

Then a terrorist called The Mandarin (Ben Kingsley) sends Stark's sleek L.A. compound crumbling into the Pacific Ocean.

Without the benefit of his usual superhero trappings, Stark is forced to face the threat, protect his love, Pepper Potts (Gwyneth Paltrow), and get a helping hand from a pushy, inquisitive kid (Ty Simpkins).

Thrown in the mix is Maya Hansen (Rebecca Hall), a scientist attempting to perfect a biological agent known as Extremis, which holds the power to cure illness and repair physical deformity but has serious side effects. Aldrich Killian (Guy Pearce) is a diabolical entrepreneur who hopes to make a fortune by exploiting Extremis.

Unlike other recent Marvel movies, where God is acknowledged in positive ways (see *Captain America* and *The Avengers*), *Iron Man 3*'s faith-based aspects are not as clearly evident, other than the good-versus-evil theme.

Stark, who narrates the film, talks a lot about "the demons" we form via people we have wronged. Also, Stark is driven by anger toward The Mandarin.

"You're not a man," he tells the supervillain through TV reporters. "You're nothing more than a maniac. I'm not afraid of you. No politics here—just good, old-fashioned revenge!"

Iron Man 3 reportedly was originally budgeted at \$140 million. But after *The Avengers* became a huge hit, Marvel Studios and Disney upped it to \$200 million. Overall, this blockbuster superhero flick didn't skimp on its dazzling special effects and action sequences, but it should have toned down its violence meter.

Bottom line: If you make a superhero movie you can't take the kids to, you've done something wrong.

Content Watch

Iron Man 3 is rated PG-13 for sequences of intense sci-fi action and violence throughout, and brief suggestive content. Although the sexual innuendos appear toned down from the first two Iron Man films, most of the movie's sexual content is aimed at have comedic implications (girls wear bikinis while playing table tennis, and Stark complains that Pepper doesn't wear a sports bra and undies at home). But the movie also features talk that implies sex, as a woman speaks of having a one-night stand and a prostitute lays on a couch and gives the impression of being drunk.

The film also revolves around Extremis, which is a drug, and its effects are creepy and scary. There are a few uses of God's name in the film, although there is no major profanity.

This film's extensive violence is the main area of concern. A terrorist executes a politician on live TV (although not shown), and the final battle is intense and emotional, with many characters dying. *Iron Man 3* could be scary for small children, so strong caution is advised.