

'Men in Black 3' Time Warps Through Fun Barrier

How does a sequel outdo the original without outdoing the original? Make it just as great, but then connect with the heart on a deeper level. *Men in Black 3* is just that—*Men in Black* with a deeper connection.

Men in Black 3 revives the science fiction comedy franchise that hasn't seen the big screen in a decade. The 1997 original grossed nearly \$600 million, spawning the 2002 sequel, *Men in Black II*.

Quick primer: Agent K (Tommy Lee Jones) and Agent J (Will Smith) are members of the Men in Black (MIB), a secret agency without ties to any government, whose goal is to maintain earth as a "neutral zone" for extraterrestrial aliens—whom they disguise as humans. The agency maintains its secrecy by using a neuralyzer to wipe the memories of those that encounter either them or the aliens.

We have seen what the MIB can do. We have seen the cool firepower and the gnarly aliens that pass through their lives. What we didn't know was the personal stuff. Sure, we know how Agent J became a MIB, but what about Agent K? What made K who he is? Why is he so hard-nosed? What is his story?

Men in Black 3 literally goes down memory lane. Directed by Barry Sonnenfeld, director of *Men in Black*, with Steven Spielberg as executive producer, the time-travel flick takes off at a rapid pace—thrusting Agent J back to the 1960s and featuring a slew of retro-inspired aliens.

One of the deadliest aliens to pass through the MIB system is Boris the Animal (Jemaine Clement). The last of his species, he escapes from an uber-high security MIB prison—actually built on the moon of all places—with one purpose in mind ...

kill his arresting officer, Agent K.

To do so, Boris travels back in time and, apparently, kills K. The universe shifts and Agent J is the only one who recognizes it. J must travel back in time (very cool and scary) with the help of a nerdy inventor, Jeffrey (Michael Chernus), to MIB's early years in 1969. He must stop Boris from killing a young Agent K (Josh Brolin) before his future partner can arrest the alien. With the assistance of Griffin (Michael Stuhlbarg), an endearing and mysterious humanlike creature who can see all possible results of any given scenario, J might succeed in saving K and change back history.

Josh Brolin as Agent K is perfect—delivering Tommy Lee Jones' deadpan humor and staccato delivery like second nature. Will Smith brings the cool as only he can. Bill Hader as Andy Warhol provides the best scene in the flick. Emma Thompson is 0, competently replacing Rip Torn's MIB-chief Zed. Don't forget to be on the lookout for the cameos of famous people who are supposedly aliens!

Rated PG-13, *Men in Black 3* features brief suggestive content (unfortunately, lots of cleavage in the first three minutes and a nasty make-out scene with a long-tongued alien) and a spattering of mild language at the start. My 11-year-old will not be able to see this film for years because of the first few minutes. As a whole, eliminating those elements wouldn't have hurt or changed the story or its impact in any way.

Light years away from being a faith-based movie, *Men in Black 3*, though, delves into scriptural principles and themes, including true friendship, revenge, self-sacrifice and of course, good versus evil.

I won't say that *Men in Black 3* is better than the original. I just cannot. I remember the newness of it all and the imaginative world that the original film opened up. Even though *Men in Black 3* went a lightning-fast two hours, there

was a relaxed feel to the story—as if the director really knew where he was going with it. Loose ends were being tied up—even ends you didn't know were loose. You can tell that some real planning and thought went into this storyline. It is appreciated.

Of course there are lots of funny moments again, with the aliens providing plenty of the laughs. It also ended on a very touching note—way more touching than I would have expected. People had tears in their eyes. Not crying, just misty. Me too. It's that kind of an action, aliens, blow-'em-up, relationship-type movie. *Men in Black 3* returns back to what made it great—a fun thrill ride full of observational comedy and personal connection.

Content Watch:*Men in Black 3* is rated PG-13 for sci-fi action violence, brief suggestive content and profanity. It's a movie about battling aliens, so a lot of them get blown up (usually just gooey splatter) and Boris kills a lot of people with these darts he shoots out of his hands. Some of the aliens, from the planet Glamourian, are scantily clad in a few scenes, but are not the focus. The movie could be scary for small children, so caution is advised.

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