

'Spider-Man' Swings With Amazing Effects And Action

"With great power comes great responsibility" was the  memorable quote from Sam Raimi's original *Spider-Man* in 2002, which helped propel a film franchise into the box-office stratosphere and launched a plethora of comic book blockbusters.

Arriving only five years after *Spider-Man 3*, *The Amazing Spider-Man* doesn't feature a similar memorable quote, but it's probably safe to say this about Sony's reboot of the Marvel Comics' superhero: "With great special effects and action plus strong character development comes great response at the box office."

Independent filmmaker Marc Webb (*500 Days of Summer*) takes over for Raimi and a Brit who's never been in an action movie before (Andrew Garfield, *The Social Network*) takes the reins from Tobey Maguire as the wisecracking, web-swinging teenager Peter Parker. Also, blond-haired Gwen Stacy (Garfield's real-life girlfriend, Emma Stone, *The Help*) is Spidey's love interest—not the fiery red-head Mary Jane Watson (Kirsten Dunst).

Webb's film makes deliberate departures from Raimi's original, focusing heavily on the hero's high-school life as a skateboard-riding outsider and expanding on Peter's quest to understand why his parents disappeared when he was young. His search puts him on a collision course with Dr. Curt Connors (Rhys Ifans), his father's former partner whose evil alter-ego, the Lizard, becomes Spider-Man's nemesis.

Although the action sequences don't start in earnest until the second hour of the 136-minute movie, *The Amazing Spider-Man* delivers plenty of punch when Spidey literally swings across

the screen. Webb preferred to use practical special effects—real people—instead of computer-generated imagery (CGI) whenever possible. The film crew built rigs 200- to 300-feet long and tapped stuntmen skilled in acrobatics, so that they could make Spider-Man physically swing.

Indeed, Spidey's swinging sequences are pretty amazing, especially in 3D, and the inclusion of artificial web-shooters developed by Peter—as in the comic books—is spot on. A lot of CGI, though, shows up on the Lizard.

The acting by Garfield and Stone—not to mention the chemistry between the two—shines, and the film features a strong supporting cast of Uncle Ben (Martin Sheen) and Aunt May (Sally Field). Speaking of which, Uncle Ben and Aunt May provide a lot of the moral compass of the movie. They tell Peter to do good things, that doing good things is a duty and doing the right thing is not a choice.

The Amazing Spider-Man touches on some Christian elements of self-sacrifice and the pitfalls of revenge, but the first three Spider-Man movies had a stronger faith-based content.

Overall, I still prefer the first *Spider-Man*, but *The Amazing Spider-Man* is way better than I expected. Moviegoers will surely be climbing up walls—I mean head to their local cineplex—to catch this Spidey incarnation, which has a lot of history to live up to. The trilogy of Spider-Man movies directed by Raimi brought in close to \$3.5 billion in worldwide box office and keyed billions more in home video, toys, licensing and video games.

The Amazing Spider-Man's script features a slew of familiar items—the spider bite that provides Peter his powers, the horrible death of Peter's uncle and the teen's transformation from an awkward 17-year-old into a web-swinging hero—causing consternation from fanboys about potential repetition.

"They have a lot to live up to," Dunst said after plans for

The Amazing Spider-Man were announced. “They’re gonna tell the story, I guess, from the beginning again—but in a different way. But it wasn’t that long ago that we told that story. So the pressure’s on again a little bit in that way. Yeah, they’re in a funny position. But, hey, I’m sure they’re gonna work it out.”

Content Watch: Rated PG-13 for sequences of action and violence, *The Amazing Spider-Man* has a darker and more intense feel than the first three Spider-Man movies—depicting a little more blood with Spidey getting bruised and hurt, and a bully beats up Peter. The Lizard claws and tries to rip apart people, which makes him quite scary for younger kids. There is no explicit sex implied or depicted, but Peter and Gwen French kiss several times. Peter lies several times. Ultimately, Peter goes from a vengeful teen to a redemptive, self-sacrificial hero.