

'X-Men: First Class' Best of the Series

✖ With four comic-book movies coming out this summer, *X-Men: First Class* seemed to draw the least amount of excitement. "Another X-Men movie?" seemed to be the common thought. However, *X-Men: First Class* surprisingly turns out to be the best movie about Xavier's mutants so far, and it may turn out to be the best comic movie of the summer.

Set mostly in the '60s, the film details the story of the beginning of the X-Men, and, more importantly, the beginning of the relationship between Charles Xavier and Magneto. It's this relationship and the two actors, James McAvoy and Michael Fassbender, that bring it to life and really set this movie above your normal comic action-fest.

The plot follows Xavier and Magneto as they grow up in very different childhoods, one with a privileged upbringing and one in a Nazi concentration camp (guess which one ends up turning into a bad guy). As they grow older, they cross each other's paths in search of the movie's villain, a mutant who is arranging the Cuban Missile Crisis in hopes of starting World War III. They form a team to deal with the threat, and the first class of X-Men is born.

McAvoy (*Wanted*, *Atonement*) is a joy to watch as a young Xavier, bringing youthful energy and fun to a character we normally

associate with being old and serious, while still remaining true to his identity. Think Ewan McGregor doing a young Obi-Wan Kenobi. Fassbender (*300*) has the best role in the film as a young Erik Lehnsherr (Magneto), the revenge-seeking loner hunting down the man responsible for killing his mother. Fassbender makes his character scary and relatable at the same time, and really hits the right morally ambiguous tones.

The two characters have always enjoyed a unique connection as archenemies and friends, and this film really nails that aspect of the relationship and explains how it first developed. You see two men who genuinely like each other while sharing diametrically opposing views. It's tragic to see the friendship grow throughout the film, because you know how it will end.

Also surprisingly enjoyable to watch is Kevin Bacon (*Apollo 13*, *Footloose*) as Sebastian Shaw, the bad guy responsible for Magneto's dark past and the current crisis. It's great to see Bacon back in a big role, and he really sells his performance as a mutant terrorist with a businesslike manner. Unfortunately, his primary sidekick, Emma Frost, is played quite poorly by January Jones (*Mad Men*). This is one actress who is not making the leap to movies well.

☒ Backing up the main characters are their young mutant teammates, who don't get very much screen time but do a good job with what they have. The biggest standout is Jennifer Lawrence as a young

Mystique (the blue-skinned girl who can change her appearance). After her Academy Award-nominated performance in *Winter's Bone*, it's good to see that Lawrence can sell characters in both summer blockbusters and art-house flicks. She's looking like an up-and-comer.

The rest of the film is what you'd expect—exciting but predictable music, decent directing from Matthew Vaughn and fun special effects. The final action sequence really does feel epic and gives a nice payoff to the movie, but the real fun here is watching the character interactions and their growth throughout the film. If you want to go to the movies over the next few weeks, you can't go wrong with *X-Men: First Class*.

Content Watch: *The film is rated PG-13 for sexual innuendos, action and a few curse words. The violence isn't too serious, and the language is minimal.*