

Spiderman trilogy unveils sensitive superhero

By Kam Williams
Sentinel-Voice

Sometimes, more is less, and this, unfortunately, is the case with "Spider-Man 3." Director Sam Raimi has upped the ante in terms of just about every aspect of his latest installment of the storied Marvel Comics franchise.

This means that the first blockbuster of the 2007 summer season features plenty of twists, more intense fight sequences, more implausible cartoon physics, the next-generation of dazzling computer-generated special effects, increasingly inscrutable adversaries, a new romantic interest, an evil Spidey alter ego, a couple of love triangles, zanier comic relief, and even several singing performances.

The upshot is that what we're dealing with here is a scatter-plotted production, which cost close to a quarter-billion dollars to make and needed 140 minutes to introduce, develop and mesh all the additional material. Yet, what's most remarkable



"Spider-Man 3" is an action-fest of a blockbuster that has a surprisingly sensitive side.

about this unorthodox adventure is the inordinate amount of attention it devotes to the ensemble's emotional states.

When was the last time you saw a superhero shed tears or forgive the nemesis who's just explained why he's been trying to waste him? Perhaps such concern with feelings is a sign of our more enlightened times, but I'm not sure how many fans

of the genre really care to empathize with a diabolical villain or to see an ordinarily invincible protagonist portrayed as being quite so vulnerable.

Consequently, the pre-teens in this review-proof picture's desired demographic are likely to be squirming impatiently in their seats during its extended breaks from the action

dedicated to plumbing the psyches of so many sensitive characters.

At the point of departure, we find Peter Parker (Tobey Maguire) and Mary Jane (Kirsten Dunst) right where we last left them, blissfully in love. She has just landed the starring role in a Broadway musical, while he's dividing his time between fighting crime and his freelance job as a photographer for the fictional *Daily*

Bugle, which is located in Manhattan's famed Flatiron Building.

The critics pan MJ's opening night performance, and tensions between the couple arise after well-meaning Peter fails to offer the shoulder she needs to lean on. So later, she never lets on when she's replaced by an understudy or that she's miffed about his being kissed while accepting the key to the city by the cutie pie he saved (Bryce Dallas Howard).

As a result, his secret plan to propose to her at a fancy restaurant goes awry, the help of an obsequious maitre d' (Bruce Campbell) notwithstanding.

Back at the newspaper, Peter now has a competitor, Eddie Brock, Jr. (Topher Grace), and the two find themselves competing for the approval of their irascible boss, J. Jonah Jameson (J.K. Simmons).

The film's funniest moment transpires during a hilarious scene when the short-fused editor fumbles with his blood pressure pills.

Meanwhile, a new arch-enemy emerges after police

chase a perpetrator (Thomas Haden Church) into a demolecularization sand pit at the moment of a scientific experiment. The man instantly morphs into Sandman, a shape-shifting misanthrope who proves to be more than a match for the cops.

Thus, it falls to Spider-Man to deal with this menace, when not addressing numerous other sidebars, such as solving the murder of his Uncle Ben (Cliff Robertson); tender moments with his Aunt May (Rosemary Harris) about his intention to pop the question; attending to his temporarily amnesiac best friend, Harry (James Franco); and wrestling with the demons that emerge when he dons a costume turned black by an evil force from outer space.

Just remember, Spidey's agonizing, introspective and second-guessing himself every step of the way, like Woody Allen in a mask and stretchy pants. Your friendly neurotic Spider-Man.

Very good (3 stars). PG-13 for intense and exciting action sequences.

Rap

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Welton says he's been listening to rap music since he was a teenager. And while he's noticed the music getting dirtier, that hasn't stopped him from enjoying it.

He said rappers use songs to express themselves, and there's nothing wrong with that because it's just music.

Rapper Snoop Dogg was quoted recently defending rap lyrics in an MTV interview in which he said that rappers are not talking about women who are doing things with their lives, but rather "'ho's" who aren't doing anything.

In that case, no woman should be degraded, says John Smith, chair of the National Newspaper Publishers Association.

He says the young Black men appear to have little knowledge of the sacrifices and contributions that Black women have made

to the progress of the race and to the support of Black men. But, he says, Black women must also stand against degradation of themselves.

"The Black females have to stand up just like C. Delores Tucker and the ladies at Spellman College and stop allowing money, in particular, to dictate to them and their sexuality. They need to withdraw from allowing these people to utilize them in these videos. The almighty dollar ought not to dictate to them their values," says Smith.

"The rappers don't understand the importance of Black females and their being... Yet, all of a sudden, they started degrading them."

Even women appear duplicitous on the topic, said Silsbee: "If women are willing to shake in front of cameras for rap videos, then they can't complain about the lyrics of the songs."



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Oprah Winfrey, center, reflects on the performance of the cast of the Broadway musical "The Color Purple" during the curtain call after the Chicago premiere on Thursday.

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