

# 'Spider-Man' spins a web of excellence

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From the moment Peter Parker was bitten by a genetically enhanced spider until the ending credit my eyes and my thoughts were glued to "Spider-Man." I felt like a child, wide-eyed, sitting on the edge of my seat, thrown from tender sadness to humor to excitement.

"Spider-Man" is impossible to categorize by normal standards—it is romance, action, comedy, sci-fi and suspense. Only a true superhero has the power to make so many elements work in harmony.

In many instances the movie strays from Stan Lee and Steve Ditko's original creation, but I think the live-action web-slinging and building climbing more than make up for it.

One of the best changes is Spider-Man's web-slingers are a natural ability instead of man-made web cartridges. This alteration makes his character more believable (what high-school student could really make a steel-strength chemical web solution?) and adds humor as he attempts to figure out how to use his new attribute.

Tobey Maguire was the ideal choice for the role of a web-slinging schoolboy. I can't imagine anyone else mastering

this unlikely hero role the way he did. His boyish looks and geeky mannerisms made Peter Parker as I've always imagined him. Maguire transforms from a nerdy outcast being picked on at school to a misunderstood hero who is bullied by the media. He plays a very complex character with flawless transitions and impressive sincerity.

When I heard Kirsten Dunst was taking on the role of Mary Jane, I doubted she'd be able to pull it off, but I was pleasantly surprised with her performance. The comic book Mary Jane is a supermodel, but the writers wisely changed her character to the girl next door. Dunst's enthusiastic depiction of Spider-Man's true love is believable and consistent. She accurately displays the turmoil of a teenage girl, from angst caused by her disturbing home life to her childish crush on a super hero.

Willem Dafoe's sadistic grin gives life to the Green Goblin. I love the fact that he is both head of a large corporation and an evil super villain. Dafoe has once again proven his worthiness to play the lead bad guy. He impressively plays the pathetic victim of insanity and the bloodthirsty, revenge-seeking Goblin, often at the same time.

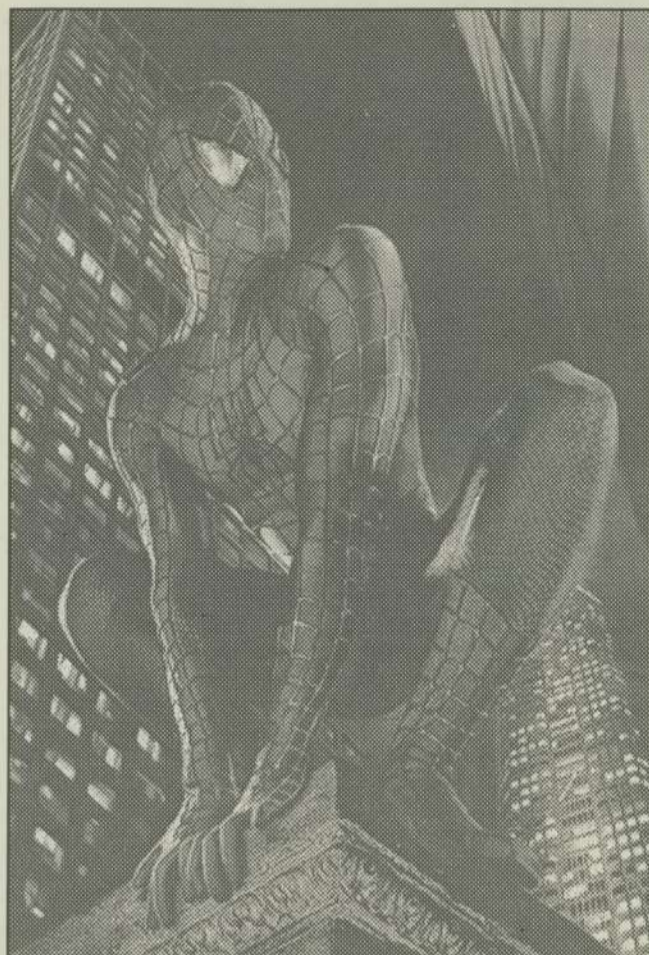
The award for best performance in a minor role goes to J.K. Simmons for his portrayal of J. Jonah Jameson, the owner of The Daily Bugle. Parker meets Jameson while searching for a job. From the moment I saw Simmons's beady eyes peering at me over the stub of a cigar, I read "slimeball" all over him. His voice, his look, and his body language embody the perfect destroyer of Spider-Man's public image.

Yet somewhere along the line, the truth slips out he's not all bad. It is Jameson who creates controversy surrounding Spider-Man's reputation, and it is he who helps Peter Parker when he's searching for work.

The acting is well matched by other artistry. Danny Elfman's dramatic strains of stringed instruments perfectly complement Spider-Man as he soars through the air dangling from a silk thread. Amazingly life-like special effects and computer animation turn impossible events into reality.

"Spider-Man" is a roller coaster of heartbreak, comedy, action, fantasy and real life that left me wanting more. I give "Spider-Man" four stars, a 10, and two thumbs up.

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Internet Photo

Spider-Man (Tobey Maguire) keeps an eye on the chaos of the city below as people gather at theaters to keep an eye on him. The movie smashed all box office records its first weekend, grossing over \$100 million.

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