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BY IAN VAN ORDEN



"It's been a long road to get back home. And that's what Rand is to me. Home."

"Iron Fist," released on March 17 as the most recent addition in the Netflix and Marvel partnership, spends much of its season exploring the title character's struggle between two worlds. Danny Rand, the "Iron Fist," was born into wealth, but due to a plane crash when he was young, he was left orphaned and stranded in the Himalayas before being taken in by a group of monks. Trained by the order as a martial artist, he returns to his former home in New York only to discover a conspiracy within his company. Rand's investigation into this conspiracy forms the major plotline of the show.

Compared to its predecessors, "Iron Fist" differentiates itself with its focus on kung fu and the spirituality related to the character's use of martial arts.

In many ways, the series feels like a Marvelized version of a kung fu classic, though it falls short of even the weakest Bruce Lee flick. Especially near the beginning of the season, most of the fight scenes feel stiff at best.

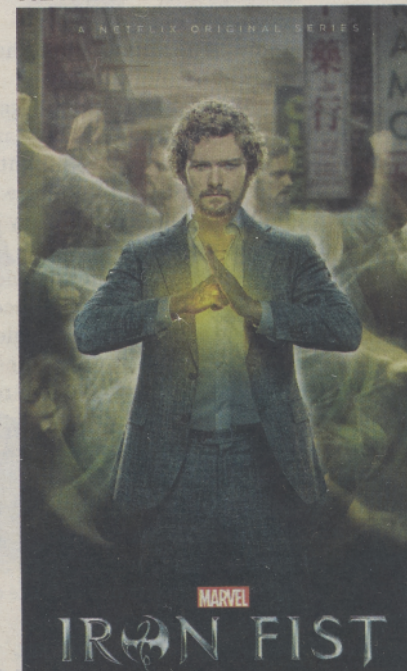
This improves as the series moves on, with two scenes near the end of its run representing truly great kung fu action (look for the drunken boxer and the major action sequence in episode 10). Its failings are strikingly noticeable when compared to the other Netflix series. It is especially obvious when compared to Daredevil, another series that features a form of martial arts.

Yet another failing of the series is its pacing. It begins slowly, with the first few episodes dedicated to introducing the series' various characters and conflicts. This would not, in itself, be a negative, as this could have allowed for a fair amount of character development, but the show instead focuses far too much on Rand's struggle with first regaining his share of his

family's company, and then the decisions he makes thereafter. This also causes the latter half of the season, especially the last three or four episodes, to feel especially rushed, as if the writers realized that they had left far too many plot threads open to untangle in the short time they had left. Two especially important characters are not introduced until this point and they are left underdeveloped and underutilized.

"Iron Fist" represents the weakest entry in the Netflix/Marvel partnership thus far. Though it is not irredeemably bad, with characters like the returning Claire Temple (the only character present in each of the Netflix series so far) and Harold Meachum, one of the series antagonists, embodying some of the season's best moments, it does not hold to the standard of quality present in the other Netflix produced series. With any luck, this is a fluke and not a sign of a shift away from the fantastic film work present in the previous series.

NETFLIX ORIGINAL: IRON FIST



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