

movie review

BY JAY BOBBIN

Matt Damon lands effectively in 'The Martian'

In director Ridley Scott's 2005 shot at sci-fi, "The Martian" (which FX shows Sunday, Jan. 10) actually is an earthling ... and not just any earthling, but Matt Damon.

That stacks the deck a bit as the actor plays an astronaut stranded on Mars, since his past work makes it fairly easy to guess that he'll be resourceful enough to survive. It would take more than the angry red planet to make Jason Bourne crumble, right?

Actually, "The Martian" is a pretty dazzling adventure based on Andy Weir's novel and detailing how fellow crew members who think Damon's character died in a wild dust storm leave him behind, how he endures, how others finally figure out he's still alive, and how his rescue is mounted – against many odds that just keep mounting.

After visiting space previously in such films as "Alien" and "Prometheus," not to mention his other flights into fantasy such as "Blade Runner," director Scott proves it's still a fine playground for him. Damon shows he's comfortable in the cosmos, too. He already had a basis in outer-space movies, given his appearance in the previous year's "Interstellar," but "The Martian" is focused much more on him.

In fact, it almost could be considered a 50-years-later update of "Robinson Crusoe on Mars," a classic that was produced by genre veteran George Pal. Of course, that much more can be done technically now, but the

theme of "The Martian" largely is the same.

A solid supporting cast including Jessica Chastain (also an "Interstellar" alum), Kate Mara, Jeff Daniels, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Sean Bean and Kristen Wiig (not the most expected presence in a sci-fi movie, but doing what she has to do as a public-relations executive quite well) helps keep the story grounded. That parade of performers also does much to retain interest in the single-idea story, which runs well over two hours, particularly with television commercials added in.

The picture's weight expectedly falls and stays on Damon, however, and his character goes about the business of surviving alien surroundings with good cheer. Others might crumble a lot sooner in those circumstances, but there still is a certain movie-star image to protect here, and the film services Damon quite well in that way.

For all of its many fantastical trappings, "The Martian" ultimately is a very human story, and its makers never lose sight of that. That's why it works.



WORD SEARCH

In the grid below, twenty answers can be found that fit the category for today. Circle each answer that you find and list it in the space provided at the right of the grid. Answers can be found in all directions—forward, backward, horizontally, vertically and diagonally. An example is given to get you started. Can you find the twenty answers in today's puzzle?

Today's Category: TV & Film Dogs, The 7 Dwarfs, Santa's Reindeer

N	E	X	I	V	S	L	E	E	P	Y	R	1.	Lassie
L	R	E	R	E	N	N	O	D	S	I	A	2.	_____
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L	A	S	S	I	E	T	E	M	O	C	G	8.	Doc	18.	Sneezy
S	B	C	N	D	B	Y	C	H	U	D	X	7.	Dasher	17.	Sleepy
B	D	U	H	I	E	C	H	G	G	R	D	6.	Dancer	16.	Rudolph
A	L	P	G	P	T	P	H	O	Y	E	G	5.	Cupid	15.	Rin Tin Tin
S	G	I	O	S	L	N	G	T	Z	H	G	4.	Comet	14.	Prancer
H	C	D	T	O	N	C	I	O	E	S	A	3.	Blitzen	13.	Lassie
F	K	G	D	Z	G	O	H	T	E	A	T	2.	Bashful	12.	Happy
U	S	X	H	E	D	G	G	N	D	S	11.	Grumpy	11.	Grumpy	
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