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MOVIES & SHOWTIMES

'Army' fun but riddled with problems

BY MAKENZIE WHITTLE • The Bulletin

No one will be shouting about a Zack Snyder's vision being ruined by a subpar, studio hatchet job. With his latest film, the Netflix Original "Army of the Dead," Snyder returns to his roots and delivers a gory, action-filled but over-long zombie movie that mixes "Ocean's 11" and "Dawn of the Dead" with hefty doses of canon building that Snyder focuses way too much on.

The premise is pretty simple and takes all of 10 minutes to present to the audience. A government experiment is being transferred from Area-51 to another location in the Nevada desert.

When the truck carrying the payload is hit by a car and dumps the experiment which turns out to be a ravenous zombie who proceeds to bite and turn the entire military escort it's been given.

They then set their sights on the bright lights of Las Vegas and through a surprisingly funny and informative montage, we see the entire city turn into the walking dead with survivors merc-ing every brain-dead thing that comes their way.

We flash forward, and the government has walled off the city and plans on dropping a nuke on it, destroying all remaining zombies within the borders.

Fearing the loss of millions of dollars locked away in his casino, businessman Bly Tanaka (Hiroyuki Sanada), hires one of the surviving mercenaries, Scott Ward (Dave Bautista), to assemble a crew to retrieve it with the promise of a large payout on completion.

Gathering his old teammates Maria and Vanderhoe (Ana de la Reguera and Omari Hardwick) plus his daughter Kate (Ella Purnell) and some newcomers including a sharpshooter and his partner, a safe-cracker, a helicopter pilot and Tanaka's assistant (Raul Castillo, Samantha Win, Matthias Schweighöfer, Tig Notaro, Garret Dillahunt).

When they get to the site a smuggler named the Coyote (Nora Arnezeder) guides them in and introduces them and the audience to the concept of different kinds of zombies that reside here including a group known as Alphas, an intelligent strain created when bitten by the original zombie, Zeus (Richard Cetrone), who grant them safe passage through in exchange for a sacrifice of one of the quar-



Clay Enos/Netflix

Dave Bautista performs in a scene from "Army of the Dead" streaming on Netflix.

antine camp's pervy guards.

As the crew makes their way to the safe, classic, slow zombies lay in their path as well as sabotage among their own ranks.

There is way more plot than you can surmise in one review because that seems to be Snyder's MO lately, and a lot of it is unnecessarily drawn out thanks to the co-writer/director's (Shay Hatten and Joby Harold share the screenwriting credit) obsession with plot detail and slow-motion action shots.

The script itself, while multi-layered is riddled with bad exposition which leads to more than one rolled eye and when the dialogue is good, chances are, it's given to an actor that can't handle the timing that would make it really gel.

It wants to be both a funny/quippy flick and a serious action movie, but it never quite strikes a good balance between them.

Side note: Every movie that has to fire an actor for criminal activity or impropriety should just CGI Tig Notaro into the role.

More Information

"Army of the Dead"

148 minutes

Rated R for strong bloody violence, gore and language throughout, some sexual content and brief nudity/graphic nudity



That being said, it is a fun, irreverent movie overall.

The cinematography is really beautiful, and there are nonverbal moments that work so well (although I'm not sure the subplot of knowing the ins and outs of the Alpha army was entirely necessary). It's zombies and blood and gore and there's a freaking zombie tiger!

And you can't help but chortle when Notaro shouts "Was that a g---n zombie in a cape?!" Oh yeah, there's a zombie in a cape, too.

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