

Review: Logan

[Michael Maitland-Jones](#) reviews Logan, finding a breath of fresh air in a tired genre, and a powerful piece of cinema for all filmgoers

Monday 20 March 2017



Image: 20th Century Fox

★★★★★

Director: James Mangold

Starring: Hugh Jackman, Patrick Stewart

Length: 2hr 18m

Rating: 15

'Fuck...' mumbles a bedraggled looking Hugh Jackman in the opening line of what promises to be a comic book movie different to any seen in recent years. It's hard to imagine this film existing in the same franchise as such duds as *X-Men: The Last Stand* and *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*, but it simply shows how varied the comic book genre has become; with last year's 'Deadpool' and now this, it seems that Fox (the studio behind the X-Men franchise) has decided on a more risky, and infinitely more enjoyable approach to storytelling. It is perhaps because of this that *Logan* is comfortably the most unusual comic book movie since *The Dark Knight* and joins the ranks of *La La Land* and *Moonlight* as one of the most essential films of the year so far.

The setup is worthy of a Mike Leigh kitchen-sink drama with Logan (Hugh Jackman) caring for an Alzheimer- suffering Professor X (a frail looking Patrick Stewart) in a cramped shack somewhere near the Mexican border. There is no world-ending threat, 'no CGI-fuelled fuckathon' third act (in the words of the Director James Mangold), and the drama of the film lies in the relationships between its characters. It's a challenge that Stewart and Jackman are more than capable of rising to and their very first scene together is more emotionally bruising than most films, comic-book or otherwise, you'll see this year. Newcomer Dafne Keen additionally turns in a remarkable performance as a young-runaway whose appearance is the catalyst for the film's action. The relationships between the leads and even supporting characters such as

Caliban (The Office's Stephen Merchant giving a surprisingly nuanced performance) are what give the film the kind of heart and emotional resonance that has been sorely missing from comic book movies since Christopher Nolan left the scene years ago. The film grapples with themes of memory, ageing and legacy with a degree of maturity that is almost unseen in comic book movies and will stay with you long after because of it.

The film naturally does not forget its blockbuster obligations with action and chase sequences scattered throughout, however even these are handled in a way that never feels at odds with the overall melancholy tone of the film. More impatient viewers may find themselves at a loose end when the action gives way to more dialogue based scenes in the second act of the film but the subsequent payoff is shocking, and so visceral you will forget that the film you're watching was preceded by the giant, usually family friendly, 'Marvel' logo. Director James Mangold wisely dispenses with the baggage of other superhero films and instead draws inspiration from classic Western movies, most notably *Shane* which is played during the film at one point. Jackman reportedly pitched the film to the studio as being something like Darren Aronofsky's *The Wrestler* meets Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven* and if you were thinking that the result of that sounds nothing like a conventional "comic book movie" then you'd be right. This is a film made not just for the difficult to please, and often fanatic, community of comic book fans but for filmgoers who are simply seeking a memorable experience at their local multiplex.

The film's commitment to building powerful character relationships and a visceral, violent world rooted in our own, results in a finale that, although a little more tonally uneven than the rest of the film, is more uncompromising than even Nolan was capable of achieving; the final shot of the film will leave you reeling, surprised at the film's convictions and ultimately moved. For someone who has always had difficulty getting on board with the endless barrage of seemingly homogenous Marvel films, *Logan* was a breath of fresh air for me and evidence that even a tired genre can still surprise. It's the one thing that few could have expected; not just a great comic book film, but a great film in its own right.



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