

DVD Select: Tobey Maguire has his hands full in 'Spider-Man 3'

by Robert_J_Hawkins

At one point in the absurdly dense and sprawling "Spider-Man 3" (Sony, 3 stars) even wimpy photo-boy Peter Parker (Tobey Maguire) as alter-ego, Spidey, exclaims in exasperation: "Where are these guys coming from?"

'SPIDER-MAN 3' - Tobey Maguire fights an array of bad guys in 'Spider-Man 3'. CNS Photo courtesy of Merrick Morton DVD RATINGS

4 stars: Don't miss: rent it/buy it

3 stars: Worth the risk: rent it

2 stars: On the tipping point: if nothing else is available

1 star: Don't bother: wait until it's in the \$1 bin Or maybe it was: "How many of these guys are there?"

Or, maybe: "Couldn't we have saved one of these guys for 'Spider-Man 4'?"

Either way, the Webbed Wonder has a point. Let me see if I can count the foes pitting their alter-egos against our beleaguered hero:

There's one-time friend Harry Osborn (James Franco) as the surfboarding New Goblin, avenging the death of his father Norman (Willem Dafoe), the original twisted Goblin, who makes a ghostly re-appearance.

Prison escapee Flint Marko (the buffed out Thomas Haden Church), aka Sandman, who only robs so that his little dying girl could get the medicine she needs. And this was made before Bush vetoed the Children's Health Bill! Marko also killed Parker's beloved uncle and set Peter on his angst-ridden journey.

Free-lance photographer and psycho-deviant Eddie Brock (Topher Grace) who becomes the evil black-suited Spidey known as Venom.

For different reasons, they're all trying to kill Spider-Man.

There is also a living gooey black space slime/parasite that attaches itself to humans and amplifies their baser instincts. It is the reason that Venom is Venom. So technically it can be considered a foe, or at minimum, an issue to be dealt with.

Meanwhile, it is Mary Jane (Kirsten Dunst) who comes closest when she rejects his love - thereby breaking his heart, without the use of an alter-ego. It seems Mary Jane has the impression that men should listen when women complain about their day, and offer compassion and empathy. Hmmm. Interesting concept.

As for updates: Peter Parker still hasn't figured out how to legitimately use his powers to raise his standard of living. His apartment is still a dump. He still rides a flimsy motorbike. He still shoots photos for the Daily Bugle's loud-mouthed tight-wad editor J. Jonah Jameson (J.K. Simmons).

Oh, and Spider-Man creator Stan Lee makes a cameo, as a Times Square loafer who inexplicably says "You know, I guess one person can make a difference. Enough said." He had a better cameo in the recent Fantastic 4 sequel.

Well it is great, silly fun, and, with the packed agenda, the movie never drags. Director Sam Raimi knows well enough by now how to give audiences a good time. And Peter Parker is the kind of guy you can root for - he needs our help!

ALSO THIS WEEK

"Talk to Me" (Universal, 2 1/2 stars) Based on the true story of an ex-con named "Petey" Green (Don Cheadle) who leaves prison and lands a job as the hippest DJ at a Washington, D.C., radio station in the early 1970s where he gets the radio waves in touch with the people. His close bonds help him become a hero in the riot-filled wake of the assassination of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Chiwetel Ejiofor is as mesmerizing as the polished radio station program manager who becomes Petey Green's champion. A memorable film of ambition, fear friendship and forgiveness.

"Pierrepoint - The Last Hangman" (Genius Products, 3 stars) Timothy Spall is the rotund, jovial grocery deliveryman and pub regular of the movie's title who has a witty word for his fellow tipplers, and they do for him. Life in post-World War II England is quiet until Pierrepoint's true profession is brought out of the closet by a command performance - he has to hang a bunch of post-Nuremberg German Nazis and their collaborators. He is Britain's official executioner. The public knowledge makes him a hero, at first. The fame sours.

"In the Land of Woman" (Warner Brothers, 2 1/2 stars) Adam Brody is a jilted screenwriter who bolts from Los Angeles for the calmer realms of Michigan where he hopes to regain his literary muse. Good things happen when he mixes it up with the woman (Meg Ryan) and her two daughters living across the street.

"License to Wed" (Warners, 1 star) Robin Williams latches his star - again - to a non-starter about a lovebird couple, John Krasinski and Mandy Moore, who are put through the pre-marital wringer by Williams' Reverend Frank character.

Some more: Documentary "No End in Sight" about the top-level decisions and errors which lead to the Iraq morass; Owen and Luke Wilson in the comedy "The Wendell Baker Story"; the zany times of music maker "Spike Jones: The Legend"; disturbing documentary on the horrors of Darfur "The Devil Came on Horseback"; martial arts spoofer "Jackie Chan's The Myth."

IT CAME FROM TV

Sixth season of the quirky "Scrubs" (with an all music episode by the "Avenue Q" composers); season debut of ABC drama "October Road"; season five of police drama "CSI: Miami"; the third and final season of the hip teen detective series "Veronica Mars"; made-for-TV supernatural thriller "The Initiation of Sarah"; BBC satire series "The Amazing Mrs. Pritchard"; reality tattoo show "Miami Ink."

BIG BOXES

- The entire teen-angst series "My So-Called Life" arrives in a box holding all 19 episodes and a full disc of bonus material. A true cult favorite. Launched the careers of Claire Danes and Jared Leto, among others.

- The entire Joss Whedon-created vampire series "Angel" on 30 discs.

- Animated collection "Family Guy Freakin' Party Pack" with 18 discs holding 90-plus episodes.

BIG HONKING BOX SET OF THE WEEK

"Twin Peaks: The Definitive Gold Box Edition" - on 10 discs: all 29 weird, quirky and spooky episodes plus both the original and Euro versions of the pilot. Co-created by David Lynch and Mark Frost, this series about the strange doings in the town of Twin Peaks. The memorable cast included actors Kyle MacLachlan, Joan Chen, Piper Laurie, Ray Wise, Sheryl Lee, Kenneth Welsh, Madchen Amick and Miguel Ferrer. The 18 Emmy-nominated series changed TV and how we look at it.

FROM THE VAULTS

"Barbara Stanwyck: Signature Series" from Warner Bros. is a five disc set with "Annie Oakley" (1935), "East Side, West Side" (1949), "Executive Suite" (1954), "My Reputation" (1946) and double-feature "To Please a Lady" (1950) with "Jeopardy" (1953).

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