Daybreak

A *Spider-Man: Brand New Day* Review

By: Adam Dombrow

This is going to be a bit of a tricky review to do spoiler free, so bear with me.

Those of you who know me know that I am not, nor have I ever been, the biggest Spider-Man fan. I've kind of always been annoyed by Peter Parker: I feel like he's just a massive cry baby, show-off. I suppose as I've gotten older, and due to the fact that I honestly like Tom Holland as Spider-Man, I've softened up a bit towards the old web head. I will say right out of the gate that, although I do like Holland's turn as Spidey, I haven't felt that this set of movies has necessarily taken the character in the right direction (a critique I feel I have had with ***a lot*** of the Marvel movies *since* they botched Civil War). I've harped on this a thousand times before, and I will do so here again: these companies have ***so many amazing story arcs they can tell that do not need to be changed AT ALL***, so the fact that Marvel (especially) feels this constant *need* to change key aspects for these movies is super frustrating. Look, I get that you couldn't really properly do some of these bigger stories without securing the rights to *all* of your heroes, so then why even bother? Just wait until you could do them properly so we don't have to have a dozen different versions of the same story!

All of that being said, I kind of anticipated Marvel to drop the ball here with *Brand New Day*, much like I felt they dropped the ball with *No Way Home* (which had its moments, sure, but it relied way too heavily on nostalgia). I'm happy to say that I left *Spider-Man: Brand New Day* legit *happy*, feeling that the movie was one of the better, standalone Spider-Man movies.

Don't get me wrong: I might be a hard sell as far as *enjoying* Spider-Man stuff (besides the video games, because those almost universally rule), but the movies have always *looked* great! I'll never forget being 14-years-old and going with my friends to see the original *Spider-Man* in theaters; I was mesmerized by that movie and its CGI! But then it slowly went downhill for me in terms of the movies' storyline quality (especially Sam Raimi's *Spider-Man 3*: dancing Peter Parker and his treatment of Venom are two things which I will never forgive him for**)**. Here, for the most part (I'll get into my negative takeaways in the **spoilers section**) I felt like director Destin Daniel Cretton gave us both a great *looking* Spider-Man movie, as well as one with enough emotional depth to make up for its somewhat thin plot.

Visually the movie looks gorgeous. Say what you will about New York (your style of pizza *suuuucks*), but it is *always* a sight to behold in the Marvel productions, and it's made even better when we are whipping around along with Spidey! I particularly liked the fight scenes in this Spider-Man: I felt like they struck just the right balance between when to speed things up, and when to slow them down mid fight. Spider-Man himself is more aggressive as well, displaying a fighting style that is much more similar to the video game version where he just beasts on large swarms of guys! Big kudos go out to stunt coordinator Peng Zhang and the Jackie Chan Stunt Team. For those of you who don't like wire-work style fighting a la *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, you might not enjoy this outing as much as previous ones, but I for one really dug it!

The other thing really worth mentioning about this *Spider-Man* is I feel like it delivered decent fan service in terms of team ups/cameos. I won't spoil the ones that haven't been heavily publicized, obviously, but the one that was heavily marketed was Jon Bernthal's return as the

Punisher. Good ol' Frank is actually in *a lot* of this movie, and his "frenemies" relationship with Peter almost shifts the tone into something more like a buddy cop movie, or *Deadpool & Wolverine*–something that I think fans will appreciate when contrasted with Castle's previous on-screen crossovers a la *Daredevil*.

In fact, that is a perfect segway into the discussion about the film's performances. Honestly, when it comes to Spidey and Punisher, I would be totally fine with Holland and Bernthal just indefinitely holding onto the roles. Tom Holland is *my* Spider-Man. He's the one version of both Peter Parker *and* Spider-Man that has always felt authentic to me. Holland is asked to do a lot of serious acting this time out, as Parker has been left unknown and alone–aside from a new friendship with NYPD Det. Jean Dewolff (played by *The Bear* alum Liza Colón-Zayas)–to not only deal with the death of his beloved Aunt May, but also losing his best friends as well. Holland's Parker is *by far* the most likeable version of the character depicted thus far on screen, so when he hurts, we the audience hurt right along with him, and trust me, he's down big in this one. As far as Bernthal goes, we actually see a bit of a softer side to Frank Castle here; he's still a bad ass, *wee bit* psychotic vigilante who will *always* feel compelled to do things his own way, but his heart kind of shows through a little more here, and the lighter tone is definitely welcomed!

In terms of the female leads, I *suppose* I would be a bit remiss if I didn't at least *mention* Zendaya's performance as MJ. This might be a real hot take, but here it goes: I am a much bigger Peter Parker fan when he *is not* involved with MJ. Honestly, MJ is the love interest that I find ***the least*** interesting (I personally am very ready for some Felicia Hardy action); so at the end of *No Way Home*, I was *all for* MJ forgetting about Peter, especially if that meant *less* MJ! I do feel

Zendaya does a good job portraying a version of MJ who *isn't* in love with Peter, and who is instead aloof, and kind of closed off to him. It's hard to deny the *obvious* chemistry she and Holland share when they are on screen together, though.

The real standout female performance in *Brand New Day* is MCU newcomer Sadie Sink. I for one love Sink, and think she's an incredible up-and-coming actress. Without giving away her role here (again, something I'll discuss in the **spoilers section**) I will say that Sink gives a layered performance which I hope has earned her some MCU staying power!

Kudos to Marvel's marketing team this time out for being able to keep a vast majority of not only the cameos, but virtually *all* of the film's actual plot under wraps to those who didn't go specifically looking for the spoilers, and they did so by cheekily poking the bear that is Tom Holland's inability to make it through a press cycle *without* accidentally spoiling something!

Spider-Man: Brand New Day is a lot of fun, despite being somewhat thin in terms of the plot. Although I can honestly admit that I *don't* feel like it was *the best* lead-in to the big upcoming *Avengers: Doomsday*, I do feel like the series is in good hands if the rumblings are true that Cretton will be in charge of the character going forward.

Fans of Spider-Man will no doubt be pleased with the offering (one guy sitting behind me at my showing proclaimed to his friends that this is "the best live-action Spider-Man movie yet"–a bit hyperbolic, sure, but maybe not *too* far off base), and appear to be **flocking** to the theaters (my showing was pretty full for a Thursday afternoon, and it looks like a vast majority of the showings tonight at my theater–where there is almost a new showing going every ***fifteen minutes***–are sold out), so good luck getting in to see this one before getting it ruined!

*Author's note: Continue on to the next page for the **Spoilers Section**

Now for the fun part: being able to talk about the *possible* larger implications stemming from *Spider-Man: Brand New Day*! First off, ***Thank God*** that we **finally** got some semblance of an introduction of the X-Men into the MCU with Jean Grey. Like I said in my initial review, I love Sadie Sink as an actress, so if she is going to be playing the character moving forward, I am all for it! While I do feel like the studios have already failed *two different times* doing the Dark Phoenix Saga, I suppose I'm a glutton for punishment, and I'd be willing to give them more money to see them (most likely) screw it up again! I have my (**strong**) doubts about how *Avengers: Doomsday* will play out in December, but I do feel that having the X-Men appear to *finally* be on the table for the MCU is wonderful news; they have been sorely missed so far, especially when it came to the Civil War storyline!

The only drawback to having Jean Grey be the *actual* big bad of *Brand New Day* is that it really didn't give Spidey much to do. Sure, he's chasing her around, and teaming up with Frank to fight the Hulk, etc, but it never feels like the movie is building towards anything aside from MJ's eventual rejection of Peter. The emotional core was strong enough to keep me interested,but I am certain that will not be the case for a lot of viewers, who probably went into this movie expecting a bit more story. Honestly, this movie feels *identical* to *Deadpool & Wolverine*, just with less violence.

I also think that them kind of chickening out on doing an actual Man-Spider story is kind of a bummer, although I guess it could possibly still be on the table. I know that body horror type movie would probably be too much for the kiddies–and I guess they did something similar in *Spider Noir* (I haven't gotten to it yet), but I digress.

I am genuinely excited to see how that post-credits tease ends up playing out too; it is well beyond time that we get Miles Morales introduced (at least that's who I'm thinking that was

referring to)! Maybe that's the big endgame for Holland's Spidey: to go the same route the video games seem to have gone and pass the torch to Miles and the rest of the "Spider Family".