

My Review of Cowboys and Aliens

First of all, if you haven't seen the trailer for *Battleship*, watch it. It was in front of *Cowboys and Aliens* and it demands to be seen. Check it out, and then come back here because I have more to say. Go on.

Alright, you good? You saw that? Isn't that just goddamn ridiculous!? I chuckled with condescension when they said they were gonna do a Monopoly movie, but now that *they have made* a Battleship one, I'm concerned that they will *actually* stoop to the point of creative bankruptcy where making movies based on bored games is justified.

Anyways. To the movie at hand.

First off, because I don't think a lot of people realize this; *Cowboys and Aliens* (directed by John Favreau of *Iron Man* fame) is based off of a comic book. Yeah, interesting but not surprising right? Published by Platinum Comics and written by Fred Van Lente (a writer I, as a comic book nerd, really like). It was some random, one hundred page story written back in 2006. It's pretty good.

And that's just about all I have to say about the movie as well. It's pretty good.

The movie starts when Daniel Craig wakes up in the middle of the Wild West with a mysterious metal bracelet and a memory devoid of anything except how to coldly stare at people until they get mad at him. He then makes his way to a local **Cowboy** town, runs afoul of various citizens including Paul Dano and Harrison Ford, until, without warning, **Aliens** attack! From there, the merry band of Craig, Ford, Sam Rockwell, and Olivia Wilde lead the charge in an ole' fashion gunfight against the alien invaders!

It's a bunch of fun; it really is. Favreau did a really good job of hitting the classic Western tropes that we want from a movie with "Cowboys" in it, while playing out the proper Sci-fi scenarios that the "Aliens" suggested. He had the sweeping shots of the beautiful locations they filmed on; the strong, silent, lone gun-slinging protagonist; and all the six-shooters you could ever want. The movie also successfully creeped me out with its giant slimy aliens, dissection tables, and shadowy space ship parts. I think both halves were a lot of fun to watch, and made even better because they were in the same movie.

The problems with the movie ended up being in the glue the held the two genres together. Just as the movie hit on all of the tropes of the Westerns and Sci-fi genres, it also felt it needed to throw in all the need-to-have moments of a summer blockbuster. In between the horseback riding and space ship flying; there was the obligatory lesson of tolerance that Ford's crotchety character learns; the backbone Rockwell grows; and at least two dramatic and poetic sacrifices to save the others. It was star-studded, explosion-packed and full of energy; all the necessary points of a blockbuster.

Which is the shame about the movie: with all the neat genre-bending done on paper, in practice the movie kinda just ended up being another summer action flick. When all the dust, nuclear and otherwise, settled, there wasn't a grander message or observation on humanity made. It was just the

formula for a three act narrative mad-libbed with “Cowboys” and “Aliens” instead of “Police Officers” and “Terrorists”. Which is really disappointed considering the comic it was based off was really really blatantly using the Aliens invading earth as allegory for the Europeans invading America. Like, the first three pages are split and the white people are doing the same actions to the Native Americans as the aliens do to other alien races. **That** ham-fisted. This would have been the absolute most appropriate time to use a ridiculous premise to actually say something about the minorities and illegal immigrants of the real world. I mean, they are **aliens** for christssake. No one in that producer meeting threw up a hand and brought up the idea?

That isn’t to say that the movie was unbearable. The thing about having such a star-filled show was that the performances were really great. Craig made a really excellent loner who kinda half doesn’t like anyone else and half wings it as a leader of the team. Ford growls around with the best of them with the tenacity of an aged Clint Eastwood. Rockwell is great as the meek saloon owner who had an in-the-background character arc that I wish they had brought more to the forefront. Dano wasn’t in the movie too long, but really had a presence in his own way. Wilde didn’t have a lot to do, but she played “Quiet Woman Who Stares at Daniel Craig” well enough. What she really brought to the table is that she is so freaking beautiful that I could literally not keep thinking about how beautiful she is; a fact that brings up the interesting point that her beauty was kind of a bad thing because she was in fact so pretty that she took me out of the movie a lot. A complaint that I do not mind making. I think there was some pretty decent characterization with Craig and especially Ford, who had a couple more subtle moments of evolution that I liked.

Ultimately, I had a really good time. I think it was a really roundly good summer action movie. There were times I literally gasped out loud or squealed in awe of how badass the moment was (I also saw it alone, so I was less embarrassed to vocalize because it was only strangers around me). Unfortunately it didn’t take that next, pretty obvious, step, and it had some cheesy-ness that you have to patiently sit through, but I think the cheese is less stinky than most popcorn movies, and it’s worth it for the fun action, dialogue, and other ridiculousness that comes with the territory of the premise. I would definitely suggest this for a movie night where a bunch of people are sitting around, socializing, and half watching the movie because that’s all you need to enjoy this movie; which is a good thing.

I give this movie two ruins; one the Sharif’s office and other the saloon, both destroyed by the invading aliens.

Ok, back to the *Battleship* trailer. Come on!? What IS that!?