



Nick Prescott's Reviews

Iron Man 2

Talent: Robert Downey Jr., Mickey Rourke, Don Cheadle, Gwyneth Paltrow, Sam Rockwell, Scarlett Johansson, Samuel L. Jackson.

Date of review: Thursday 29th April, 2010

Director: Jon Favreau

Duration: 124 minutes

Classification: M

We rate it: 4 stars.

Iron Man smashed the box-office apart in 2008, and in the process reminded us all just how good Robert Downey Jr. is in pretty much anything he does, and also showed how an erstwhile actor (indy favourite Jon Favreau) could strut his stuff as a director of mega-budget action fare with the best of them. Iron Man had it all: gob-smacking special-effects, a wonderfully funny and engaging script, terrific performances and a rousing story. The film was perfect popcorn fare, and, as I said to myself upon leaving the cinema, "Where's the harm in that?"

Given the huge success of the first film, a sequel was inevitable, and was almost instantly put into production. With bad-guy number one (the terrific Jeff Bridges) out of the way, all stops were pulled out to find an even more spectacular replacement to form the nemesis for number two: enter the heavily-tattooed and almost incomprehensible Mickey Rourke, playing Russian villain Ivan Vanko. We know from the beginning of the film that he's up to no good, and when he finally enters the fray as the cyberised bad-guy he eventually turns himself into, he's pretty marvellous to watch.

As everyone is saying at the moment, Rourke has recently experienced the most remarkable career renaissance of anyone in Hollywood. After exploding onto the film scene in the early-mid 1980s with brilliant, moody performances in films like Rumblefish and Angel Heart, Rourke hit something of a slippery slope, and had widely-publicised battles with drugs and the law. He took some time off for a few years to try his hand at professional boxing, treated himself to way too much Botox, and pretty much disappeared from the limelight all together. Some time later, friends like Francis Coppola and young directors like Darren Aronofsky took Rourke back under their wings, and his comeback – in *The Wrestler*, released in the same year as the original *Iron Man* – was the result. It's great to see him again, and it's great to see him having fun in a piece of big-budget spectacle like *Iron Man 2*.

The ingredients that worked so well for the filmmakers in the original Iron Man have all been well-replicated here (and let's be honest with ourselves: we're not after anything particularly new with a sequel of this kind; what we want is more of the same, only maybe funnier and with more stuff being spectacularly blown up). The humour is here again (and Downey Jr.'s comic timing is as superb as ever); the beautiful actresses are here again (this time the ultra-slinky Scarlett Johansson has been added to the cast); and the special effects department is again operating with the budget of a small Pacific nation, all in the cause of providing us with about as much fun as it's possible to have watching a big, noisy action-adventure film.

Don't think this movie will change your life, because it won't; it's about pressing all the right buttons at all the right times, and getting a fine Pavlovian response out of the audience. I'm as willing to see 200 million dollars' worth of stuff being destroyed in spectacular fashion as the next person, and when you get wisecracks by one of our most gifted actors, grunting ferocity by a rediscovered bad-boy star, and more eye-candy than boy or girl could wish for all thrown in with the ticket price, how can anyone complain?

Nick Prescott