

Introductions

1 Bare Necessities – A visit to the edge of the Arctic Ocean

Fun, in Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, is a calendar event. Out here, on the largest and most remote oil field in the United States, thousands of workers rise each morning in endless summer, eternal darkness, mosquitos, and snow, to begin twelve-hour shifts, which on the drilling rigs requires a discipline that is taken seriously: a mistake, however small, could cause this entire place to explode, as it did in West Texas two years ago, or in Texas City twelve years ago. For a change of landscape one can board a bus with elderly tourists to the edge of the Arctic Ocean, point out the artificial palm tree, suggest a dip, and laugh—the water is 28 degrees—but even that route grows dull: the single gravel lane that traces tundra abuts miles of pipeline. For the oil workers, there is little to look forward to before the end of a two-week shift except for scheduled socialization. Each summer, such fun goes by the name Deadhorse Dash, a 5K race traced across nearby Holly Lake.

2. Logan movie review

Introduction

Is “Logan” more powerful because of what the superhero genre has delivered over the last decade? Does it seem both groundbreaking and classic because it doesn’t feel like a modern superhero movie, especially those with the Marvel brand? Don’t worry. I’m not going to dissect the flaws of the Marvel and DC brands, but it’s undeniable that the modern superhero movie has relied on CGI, particularly in final acts comprised almost entirely of apocalyptic explosions. And so many of them have served as bridges between franchise entries that one feels like they’re constantly watching previews for the next movie instead of experiencing the one they’re watching. “Logan” has stakes that feel real, and fight choreography that’s fluid and gorgeous instead of just computer-generated effects. Most importantly, “Logan” has characters with which you identify and about whom you care. It's not just "great for a superhero movie," it's a great movie for any genre.

Conclusion

“Logan” is the rare blockbuster that could be a game-changer. It will certainly change the way we look at other superhero movies and how history judges the entire MCU and DC Universe of films. Don’t get me wrong. I love a good popcorn superhero movie as much as the next guy (maybe even more than most critics), but “Logan” shows how deep one can go in the genre if they just approach it in a different way. In that sense, “Logan” deconstructs the modern superhero movie. It will be hard to put it back together again.

3. Logan Review #2

Introduction

In its look at human frailty and death, James Mangold’s Logan is unlike any superhero film ever produced—and it just may change the genre for good.

As it happens, Logan also works as a spiritual sequel to the director’s 2005 Johnny Cash biopic Walk the Line. Making a name for himself with songs that exalted “heroic all-American Lazaruses,” Cash reveled in larger-than-life legends and outlaws whose grand exploits and staggering fables live long past their deaths. Later in life, however, a newfound humility would come to dictate the country singer’s twilight recordings. For example, in his 2002 cover of Nine Inch Nails’ “Hurt,” Cash laments an Ecclesiastian life lived in pursuit of future and fame. And, in one of the last songs he penned before his death, “The Man Comes Around,” the Man in Black concedes to a greater Man that all—legend and gunslinger alike—will eventually be held accountable to.

Like the characters in Cash’s early discography, Hugh Jackman’s comic-book mutant, Wolverine, is a Lazarus of sorts, too. Armed with metallic claws and regenerative ability, over his eight previous film appearances in the

X-Men franchise, audiences have seen him shot, stabbed, and drowned—only to gaze in awe as he rose moments later.

It's fitting, then, that Logan, a story about a once-invincible superhero now facing the perils of old age, would end with Cash's "The Man Comes Around." For all its comic lore and surging action pieces, Mangold's breathtaking project first and foremost functions as a deconstruction of the mythical, impregnable crusader. Logan's stark message is true, even if we choose not to think about it: All of us, including those once thought indestructible, will lose our physical freedom and fade into helplessness. No individualism or self-realization will offer a life preserver. Myth will be separated from reality.

Conclusion

Though it's the most mesmeric, stirring superhero film since Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight*, perhaps this is the best way to interpret Logan—not as just another gritty reboot of a childhood fantasy, but as a parable for the fleetingness of life and the hope that can be found in what we do not deserve.

Fitting enough, the last image of the film, just before "The Man Comes Around" begins to play, features a sign of hope—one that carries a special weight for the Christian viewer. Might Logan find the grace he longs for? Superheroes, after all, don't live forever—and as Cash sings, even the best of us will ultimately be tried by a righteous judgment:

The hairs on your arm will stand up.
At the terror in each sip and in each sup.
Will you partake of that last offered cup,
Or disappear into the potter's ground?
When the man comes around.

4. 'All the Light We Cannot See,' by Anthony Doerr

Introduction

I'm not sure I will read a better novel this year than Anthony -Doerr's "All the Light We Cannot See." Enthrillingly told, beautifully written and so emotionally plangent that some passages bring tears, it is completely unsentimental — no mean trick when you consider that Doerr's two protagonists are children who have been engulfed in the horror of World War II. Not martyred emblems, like Anne Frank or the British evacuees on the torpedoed City of Benares, just ordinary children, two of thousands swallowed up in a conflict they had nothing to do with.

Conclusion

A lesser novelist would be content with this achievement, but Doerr twists the puzzle-box once more and brings his novel into the present. One of his contemporary characters imagines the electro-magnetic waves coursing into and out of computers and cellphones, carrying with them the flood of quotidian communications that make up our lives. "Is it so hard to believe that souls might also travel these paths?" she asks, lamenting that "every hour, someone for whom the war was memory falls out of the world."

In this book — because of this book — those people do not disappear, but only become a part of the light that we cannot see.