




Oblivion: a thrill-less ride

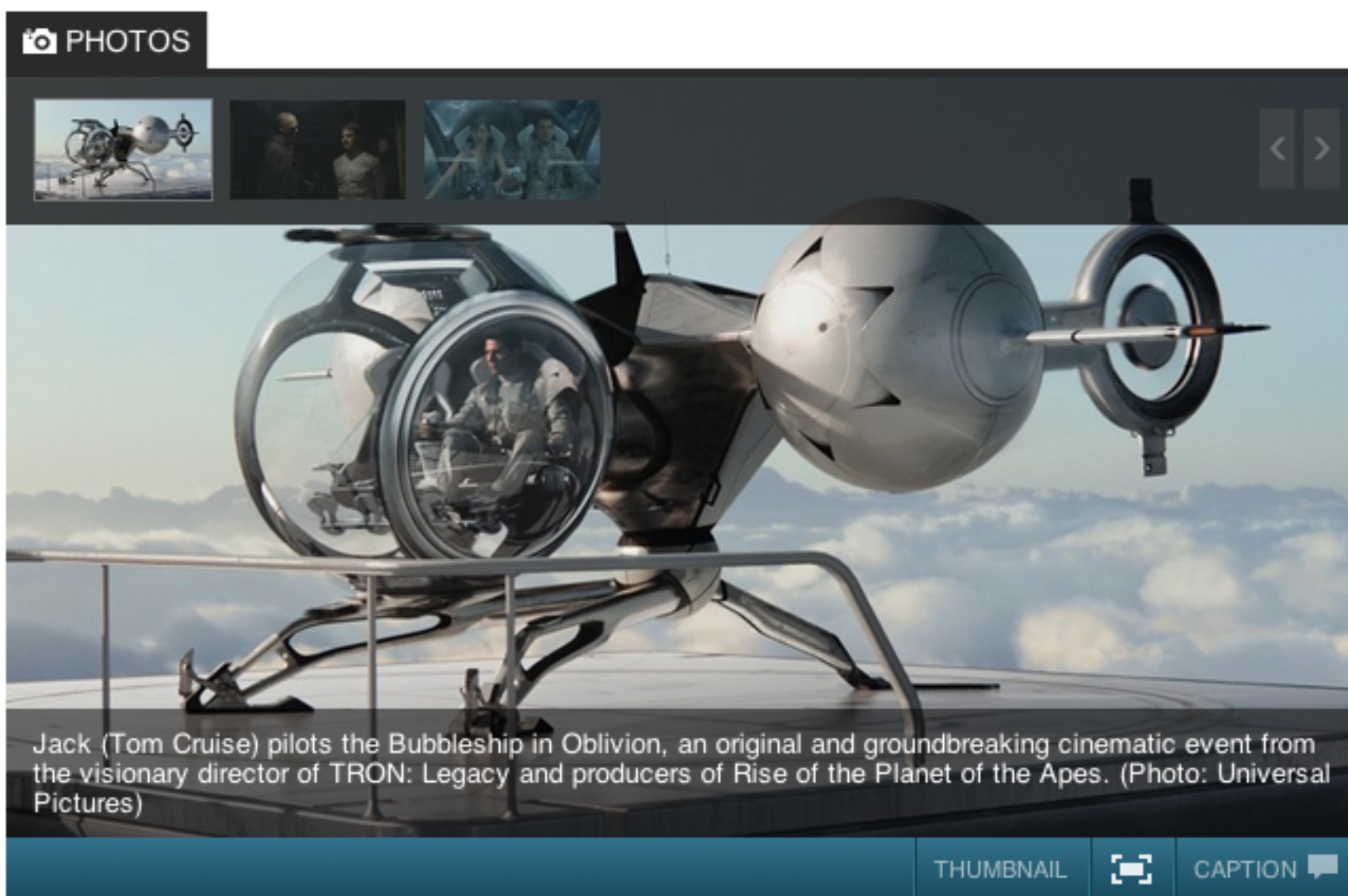
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Tom Cruise delves into yet another science fiction blockbuster that only looks and sounds phenomenal.



SINGAPORE: Aliens have once again invaded Planet Earth.

The difference this time, is that the humans have won the war, but have left Earth so badly devastated during the battle that the survivors have relocated to another planet.

In *Oblivion*, Tom Cruise's latest futuristic foray sees him playing the tough and resilient *Jack Harper*, an ex-Marine commander whose duty is to monitor and repair drones that hunt and kill alien "scavengers" left on the wrecked planet.

Most of the first half of the movie dwells on *Harper* and his partner, the beautiful but prissy *Victoria Olsen* (Andrea Riseborough), who form an "effective team", as the strait-laced Victoria puts it.

Both do not have any pre-war memories, presumably because these have been wiped to prevent enemies from getting vital information out of them.

Harper however, experiences recurring flashbacks and glimpses of a mysterious woman.

Much of these flashbacks occur in the first part of the film, which is paced so slowly that *Oblivion* may just send you into a literal state of oblivion.

Apart from seeing *Harper* fly his impressive futuristic-looking vehicle and fix drones, nothing much happens.

While fans of Cruise may be happy to see him linger about for one hour, others may wish that they had a remote control so they could skip to the part where more characters appear.

This is in the second half of the show, where *Oblivion* manages to redeem itself slightly with a series of modest action scenes and unexpected twists.

It is also where you go "Oh" every time something is revealed, and when Morgan Freeman finally makes an appearance and sheds some light on what the show is really about.

But even Freeman's charismatic presence as a resistance leader of surviving humans left on earth is unable to lift the film that lacks a good storyline.

Director Joseph Kosinski, who is best known for his debut with *Tron: Legacy*, seems to have banked on his knack for stunning visuals a bit too much instead of drafting a decent plot for this film that's based on his own unpublished graphic novel.

The story hinges on the woman (Olga Kurylenko) in the dreams of *Harper*, who falls from the sky in a spacecraft that crash-lands. The development leads to discoveries that make *Harper* have misgivings about everything he knows.

Movie-goers who have previously enjoyed Cruise's high-impact sci-fi movies such as *Minority Report* and *War of the Worlds* may be disappointed, as *Oblivion* lacks suspense and anxiety-inducing scenes.

Nevertheless, despite the bland storyline, *Oblivion* is a gorgeous film with enough action-packed scenes to keep you entertained for a couple of hours.

- CNA/gn