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Review: Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse

2018-12-14 09:00:00 by [Chris Compendio](#)

The most "comic book" comic book movie ever

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The story of Spider-Man has been told a number of times through different mediums, but animated film *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* may be the first Spidey movie to admit it. Not only does this movie own that fact, but it makes this the heart of its story. *Into the Spider-Verse* is a meta, self-aware tale that repurposes the familiar, while somehow creating a deeply personal story.

It also goes without saying that *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* is a gorgeous, visually ambitious animated movie. The flashy animation may not work for older and sorer eyes, but to the rest, it will be a delightful sensory feast. Live-action films like *Dick Tracy*, *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World*, and *Watchmen* have tried to turn the visual novel into a film, but *Spider-Verse* proves that animation is the right way to go when embarking on that quest.

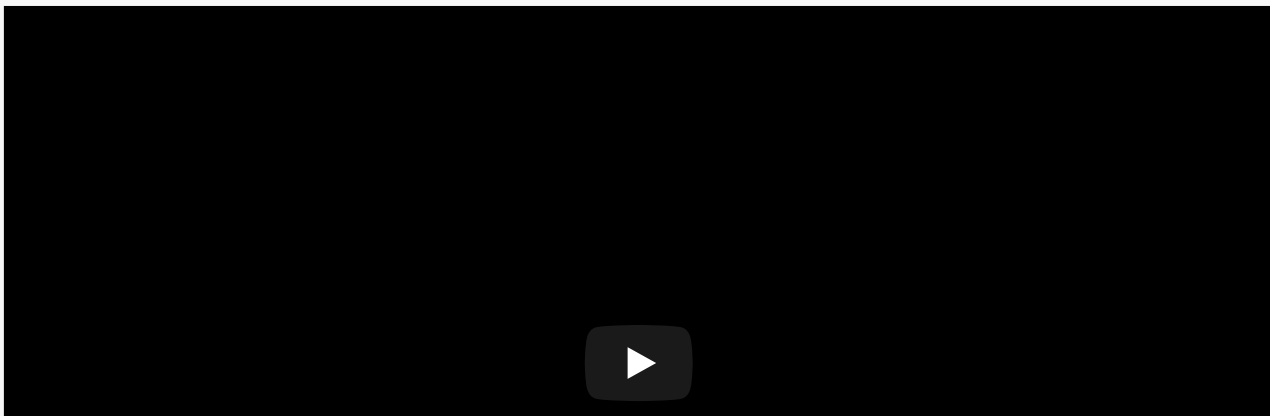
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Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse

Directors: Peter Ramsey, Robert Persichetti Jr., Rodney Rothman

Release Date: December 14, 2018

Rated: PG

This movie knows that you know the origin of Peter Parker as Spider-Man, so it immediately gets that out of the way in a clever fashion. Instead, this new story is centered on Miles Morales (Shameik Moore), and while this biracial character may be fairly popular among comic fans, *Into the Spider-Verse* represents his first major film appearance in front of mainstream audiences—and I bet they're going to love him.

Miles is a grounded and somewhat smooth character in an overall good family environment, while also resenting his transfer to a private boarding school. His life makes a major shift when he too is bitten by a genetically modified spider, not only granting him similar powers to Peter Parker but also eventually leading him to a fateful encounter with Spider-Man himself. This is followed by some multi-dimensional shenanigans, with Spider-People from other universes ending up stranded in Miles's world.



Spider-Verse turns into a bit of a buddy movie, with Miles seeking lessons from Peter B. Parker (Jake Johnson), a Spider-Man from a different universe who is down on his luck and a total slob. The cast of characters is rounded out with some quirky interpretations of the character, with Spider-Gwen (Hailee Steinfeld), Spider-Man Noir (Nicolas Cage, seriously), Spider-Ham (John Mulaney), and the mech-driving Peni Parker (Kimiko Glenn). All inhabit a different art style that bleeds into the aesthetic of Miles's universe, with Peni Parker being anime-like, Spider-Ham resembling *Looney Tunes*, Noir being totally

black and white, and Spider-Gwen with light, vibrant colors. Each character has their own expected quirks and depending on your tastes, you will for sure love some of them and get easily annoyed by the rest.

The characters are only one part of what makes the film such an auditory and visual delight. This universe has an aesthetic that makes use of the dots texture of most early comic books; onomatopoeias pop up whenever major sounds are made like in a comic panel; thought and narration bubbles appear to punctuate Miles's thought process. And expect some very fast-paced action scenes, not unlike something you'd see from the breakneck *The Lego Movie*, from *Spider-Verse* executive producers Phil Lord and Christopher Miller. The downside though is that I'm absolutely sure that many will find the fast-paced and intricately choreographed and animated action sequences to be too overly stimulating. There's a lot of flashing colors and light, and while I wasn't bothered, I can already imagine the complaints from my parents should they watch this.



The excellent voice cast is complemented well by a stellar screenplay, full of the usual wit that a *Spider-Man* film should actually have. The dynamics between friends and family are relatable and realistic, and gags are punchy and effective thanks to an Edgar Wright-like style of editing. I imagine that many viewers will love the buddy-buddy exchanges between Peter B. Parker and Miles, the latter still struggling to learn the ropes. I wouldn't be surprised, however, if audiences take to one of the other Spidey characters, to the point where the Spider-Verse basically becomes its own franchise like *The Lego Movie* for some spin-offs. It's also worth mentioning that there are some deep cuts in referencing past Spider-Man lore, including towards the live-action movies.

Despite reusing themes from previous *Spider-Man* stories, *Into the Spider-Verse* finds a way to recycle and convert them in creating a meta-story. There are so many Spider-Man stories that have been told through the years, and while the film pokes fun at this certain repetition, it is able to make a point from this. There's a wonderful moment as the final act was beginning where Miles realizes that not only do these other Spideys understand what he is going through, they are probably the best ones who do. All of these characters have gone through profound loss, but they all have moved forward and answered the call to their greater responsibility.

In a way, *Into the Spider-Verse*, more than any other *Spider-Man* film before it is about one of the core ideas of Spider-Man. No matter what background (or in this case, absurd backstory) we may have, we all have a similar journey to reach our full potential. We all have heroes and figures to look up to, we all have suffered through the loss of a loved one, and while this may be overly optimistic, I'd like to believe that many of us have at least attempted to do good for someone other than ourselves. Despite all of the multidimensional nonsense and babble, *Into the Spider-Verse* could very well be the most relatable Spidey film.



I'm sure that everyone who will watch this film will get something enjoyable out of the experience. Most of the humor focused on family dynamics and the banter between Peter B. and Miles just works, and only the most jaded wouldn't at least crack a smile. The only reason I hesitate to call this film perfect or even near-perfect is that it is just so chaotic.

Yeah, I know I said that I was able to handle the intense visuals of the film, I still have to admit that sometimes the film was just too fast. I was never quite lost, but some sequences felt rushed. The climactic final battle, in particular, was absolutely exhausting. The screen was dense with so many elements, and while I bet that some degree of surrealism was the aim, it was difficult to discern anything about the space of that final fight.

Qualm aside, this is a movie that I want to revisit and try to absorb even more. It's rich in both visuals and metacommentary, a happy mix that I didn't expect at first. While *Spider-Man 2* and *Homecoming* are movies that I admire and love, I question where they stand now that *Into the Spider-Verse* has shaken the Spidey landscape up. It's a chaotic film for sure, probably by design—still, this film is probably the most "Spider-Man" *Spider-Man* film we've ever had.



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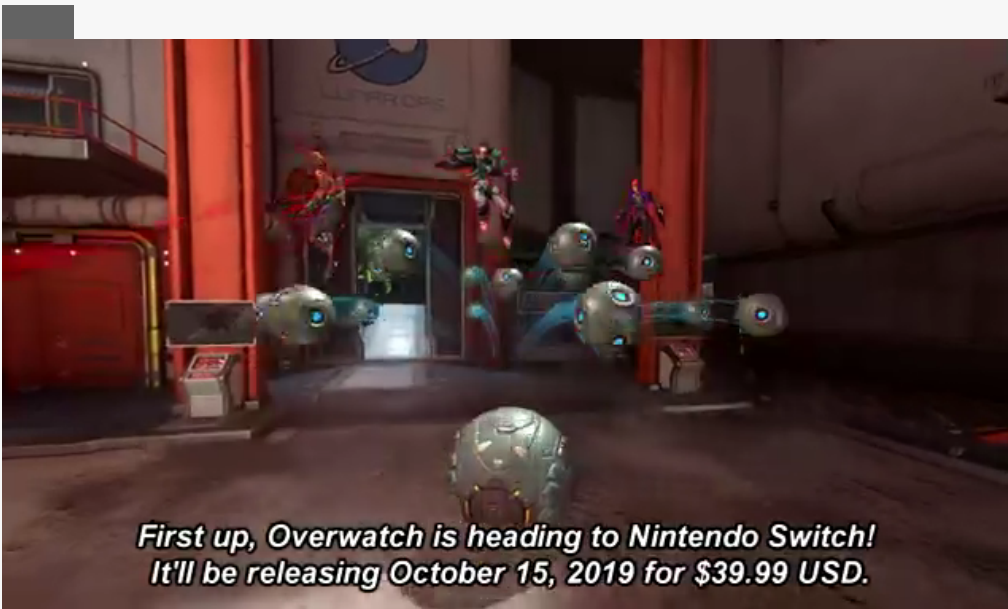
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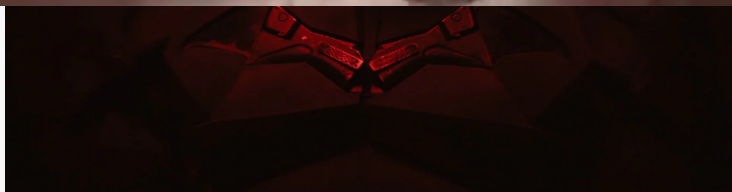


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Justice League Dark

Reeves shares camera test of Rob Pattinson as 'The

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Batman'

#TheBatman#CameraTesthttps://t.co/M1tAE2aTA1

— Matt Reeves (@mattreevesLA) February 13, 2020

On Twitter this evening, director Matt Reeves shared a camera test for his upcoming Rob Pattinson starring *The Batman* and we now have a decent idea of how the former *Twilight* star will look as the caped crusader. Cast in a light that almost made me confuse him for *Daredevil*, I do have to admit that Rob looks pretty cool as *Batman*. There's maybe a bit too much armor going on, but this suit does seem to be noticeably different from past silver screen *Batman* iterations.

The darker lighting is clearly in an effort to see how Pattinson will look in *Batman's* typical low-light situations. It's not often you see *Batman* gallivanting around Gotham in broad daylight and shooting anything in low-light can be tough. Nailing the look of a costume under those circumstances is key and Reeves seems to have found a solid design.

Now we just need to see a trailer or something and I might actually be on board with this film.

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