Adam Schaich

Dr. Gingrich

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<p style="text-align:center;">*Spider-Man 2*: The Best of the Raimi Trilogy?</p>

The Raimi Spider-Man trilogy, or the three Spider-Man movies that have been directed by Sam Raimi and starred Tobey Maguire as Peter Parker, are widely claimed to be the best film adaptations of the Spider-Man story, but which one of the three Raimi movies are the best? To answer this question, an objective review is in order for *Spider-Man*, *Spider-Man 2*, and *Spider-Man 3*. Today, we will be taking a look at *Spider-Man 2*, which was released in 2004 as the second movie in Sam Raimi's trilogy. When looking at a movie, specifically a super-hero movie like *Spider-Man 2*, it is important to review the overall plot, character development, and theme. These three factors will determine overall how well the movie functions, and should provide an objective look at *Spider-Man 2*.

One of the most important factors of all movies is the plot, which involves the overarching story of the movie that draws the viewer in. To start, let's take a look at the very first scene of the movie after the introductory logos: the opening credits. Normally, opening credits are a drawn-out and largely ignored part of the movie, but they can also provide crucial plot details, as in the opening credits of *Skyfall*. *Spider-Man 2* also utilizes the screen time of the opening credits to provide the viewer with important details. As previously mentioned, I wanted to review the effectiveness of *Spider-Man 2* as it stands alone, therefore the plot of *Spider-Man 2* should be understandable without viewing the previous entry in the trilogy. This is where the

opening credits come into play, as alongside the names of the major players in the film, artistic renditions of key scenes from *Spider-Man* are shown. This helps to not only make use of the opening credits sequence, but also provided the information from *Spider-Man* that is crucial to understanding *Spider-Man 2*. Therefore, *Spider-Man 2* passes the test of standing on its own, provided the viewer is actually paying attention during the first five minutes of the movie.

Moving onto the general plot, the story begins with a typical day in the life of Peter Parker: delivering pizza and slinging webs. As the movie continues, the viewer sees the financial troubles both Peter and Aunt May are in, as well as the deteriorating conditions of Peter's emotional attachments, as shown by his sparsely populated birthday party. After Peter is fired from his job, it becomes very clear that the overall mood of the exposition is rather depressing. Because of the mostly relatable issues troubling Peter, like relationship issues and a lack of money, the audience is captivated by his struggles, and at this point, his identity as Spider-Man is more of a subplot. This sets up the audience to be rooting for Peter from the very beginning, which is something that other movies like *Iron Man* fail to do because of the initial prosperity of the main protagonist. This will be essential to instilling a sense of pride in the audience later on that will improve any viewer's feelings about the movie. The plot continues, with a few actions scenes sprinkled in here and there to keep the viewer's attention, until we reach the ultimate low-point of the story, when Peter trashes his Spider-Man suit. This signifies a turning point in the character, which will be discussed more in-depth soon, but it also sets us up for even more of a comeback story than before. From there, we see a glimpse into Peter Parker's life without the action of Spider-Man, yet the audience remains entertained, even without the action scenes, because of how committed they are to Peter's life. This does not last long; however, as the action

quickly resumes and the story reaches its climax. Overall, the plot of *Spider-Man 2* is extremely well written and does a fantastic job of entertaining the audience. The redemption story of the main villain, Doctor Octopus, as well as the ups and downs of the main plot never cease to entertain the audience, so *Spider-Man 2* definitely earns the points for this category.

The character development that goes along with the plot of *Spider-Man 2* doesn't fall short either. You could look at any one of the main characters - Peter, Harry, MJ, etc.- and find that each one of them goes through significant changes. For simplicity's sake, I'll take a look at the main character: Spider-Man himself. Peter Parker starts off struggling to manage his dual identities because his life as Spider-Man heavily detracts from his professional, educational, and social responsibilities. After facing the deterioration of his "spidey powers", he has had enough and leaves the suit in a trashcan, rejecting his identity as Spider-Man. We see the transformation of a vigilante into a nobody, as Peter regresses to his nerdy self that was present before he was ever bitten by a radioactive super-spider. We see the man who would once rush away from his friends to chase after a speeding police car transform into a bystander who merely watches as a stranger is pummeled in a nearby alley. This is an extremely dark and low time in the story, and although Peter's life outside of fighting crime is going well, he still struggles with his negligence towards his responsibilities. Although the themes surrounding this will be discussed in greater detail later, it is important to note that Spider-Man comes back when he realizes that people need him. By taking advice from his Aunt and a vision of his dead uncle, Peter Parker realizes the world needs more heroes, so he redawns his Spider-Man identity and is off to save the city once again. This time however, Peter has a much clearer purpose and determination than he did at the beginning of the movie. This arching character development is a signature of every major film.

Movie characters should always be changing, just like the real people they are played by.

Therefore, by showing us the way Peter Parker changes throughout the film, *Spider-Man 2* not

only draws us into the story, but creates an emotional attachment between the audience and the

characters.

Like all movies, *Spider-Man 2* is not perfect. Although overall the plot is very well put

together, there does exist one major plot hole, which comes in the form of Peter Parker's loss of

his powers. One of the many issues for Peter during this movie is that his powers are starting to

fail him, leading to some extremely tight situations at some points. Then, spontaneously, his

powers reappeared when he needed them most at a critical moment during the plot. This

well-timed reappearance of Parker's powers is never explained in depth at all, leaving the

audience slightly confused as to why this is happening. Another issue in the film is the addition

of random scenes that add nothing to the plot. The most obvious one is the cake scene, in which

Peter shares a slice of cake with his landlord's daughter, a completely unnecessary character. In

fact, the entire scene was utterly irrelevant and it seems to only pad the runtime. However, both

of these issues were relatively minor and did not heavily factor into my overall experience of

Spider-Man 2.

While the primary focus of nearly every movie is to entertain, I am one of the many who

believes that movies should offer some sort of moral argument as well: a central theme that

makes sense with the plot. *Spider-Man 2* handles this extremely well. Although *Spider-Man* is

famous for its "With great power comes great responsibility", *Spider-Man 2* does not fall short of

a clever theme as well. Throughout the underdog story, we see Peter struggle profusely with

money, fighting crime, and school. As discussed earlier, Peter eventually refuses to fight crime

anymore to focus on his personal life, which obviously has disastrous effects for the city of New York. Then, enter one of the most inspiring and moving pep-talks in any movie: Aunt May's scene in the backyard. Long story short, Aunt May convinces Peter to return to fighting crime by talking about heroism and everyone's need for a role model. However, the way that she does this truly speaks to the audience, well, at least it did to me. The way she says, "I believe there's a hero in all of us" truly shows the moral message present throughout the film, and the way it is intertwined with the main plot creates an absolutely beautiful scene that fills multiple purposes.

Overall, *Spider-Man 2* is a fantastic movie. The plot, besides the redundant scenes and plot holes, is extremely well done. The characters are captivating, and the themes provide a much broader purpose that many movies painfully lack. Incorporating all of these factors together, *Spider-Man 2* is not only a must watch for superhero fans, but for anybody looking for a good movie.

Rules for Review

In order to prepare for writing my review on Spider-Man 2, I read two other movie reviews: "Captain Marvel Review: Brie Larson Takes a Trip to the '90s" by A.O. Scott, "Green Book builds a feel-good comedy atop an artifact of shameful segregation. Yikes."by Alissa Wilkinson, and "Greta' Review: Isabelle Huppert as Sweet Surrogate Mom Turned Psycho Stalker" also by A.O. Scott. I chose these two reviews because they are both relatively popular reviews for movies, which is the same category as *Spider-Man 2*. I found that these reviews followed all five of the rules listed below, and this helped to make them both enjoyable to read and informative.

1. The review should be divided into subcategories for each specific factor of the piece being reviewed. For example, A.O. Scott talks divides their review into sections about the story, setting, and writing. By following this rule, I am able to look at each part of the piece individually to avoid my judgement being clouded by my overall impression of the artwork. Furthermore, the reader can then decide whether they agree with my point of view on each factor of the art piece, rather than only seeing how I feel about it in general.

2. The review has a section at the end that ties up each of the specific factors into one general opinion. This is demonstrated by Wilkinson when she gives a recommendation based on all of the factors at the end of the review. Although it is important that I review each factor of the piece, it is also important to give an overall rating of the artwork at the end of the review in order to give my audience a satisfactory recommendation on whether or not they should also view this movie.

3. The reviewer stays relatively unbiased throughout the review, but keeps a somewhat casual tone as to not alienate the audience. For example, A.O. Scott clearly has preconceptions about *Captain Marvel*, but mostly masks these in order to create jokes and provide objective content simultaneously. When reading reviews by other film reviewers, I found that they often kept the tone of the review relatively casual; they sounded like a friend telling you if you should watch a new television show. Personally, when I read reviews that followed this rule, it was much easier to follow along with the reviewer than if they were using overly complicated language.

4. The reviewer makes references to similar pieces that help to build the audience's understanding and demonstrate the reviewer's knowledge. This is shown in both of the reviews I read when they talk about other movies that are similar to the ones they are currently reviewing.. I found that when reading other reviews, the reviewer consistently made references to other pieces that were similar to the subject piece, like other movies or tv shows. I found that this made the reviewer appear more knowledgeable about the topic.

5. The reviewer includes relevant links to sources throughout the review to provide the audience with documentation and context. Wilkinson does a great job of following this rule by including a plethora of links to external sources throughout her review. By providing links to either my sources or to sites that offer additional detail, I do not have to go ridiculously in depth into certain topics because I can trust that my audience will click on the links if they need further explanation.