

THE PREACHER

pilot reveals little

Great cast, though.

ZOHEB MASHIUR

AMC's *Preacher* is the adaptation of a comic book that many would consider unfilmable. Watching the pilot that came out on May 22, someone unfamiliar with the story may not see why that would be the case.

This is achieved by the pilot being a slow and measured build up that only hints at the carnage that is to come. Know that *Preacher*, the comic, is one that quite literally holds nothing sacred and cares not a bit if you find it offensive. If the show is to be at all faithful to its source, subsequent episodes must show the inconceivable – I can't really imagine it'll have the courage to cross the lines the comic does, but I'm aware that *The Saint of Killers* has been cast. Fans of the comic will know what that implies.

There is very little in the hour-length pilot that's truly shocking, though there's more than enough to tell you what the comics valued: a cynical worldview, a lack of respect for all authority, fast-talking characters and lots of violence to those who cross our protagonists. It pulls no punches with its visuals: a man explodes in front of a church congregation. It even has a casual news broadcast running in the background of a scene that informs you Tom Cruise has also spontaneously exploded.

Preacher isn't just about being very naughty, it's primarily memorable for its trio of protagonists and I'm happy to say that every one of them has stellar casting. We meet Jesse Custer (Dominic Cooper), doubting, ineffectual preacher with a bad past; Tulip O'Hare (Ruth Negga), Jesse's resourceful, criminal ex; and Cassidy (Joseph Gilgun), Irish vampire. It's hard

to describe what I'd expect of an Irish vampire, but Gilgun hits all the right notes and I'm excited to see if he can handle the more emotionally complex Cassidy story arcs that happen later in the comics. Ruth Negga steals the show and it's worth watching the pilot just to see her kick butt and have the time of her life.

Less immediately winning is Dominic Cooper, but that seems to be by design. Jesse Custer is a complex character but the show version begins in a state of brooding and it's a long time into the pilot before we see him break loose and knock some heads together. This isn't criticism as Cooper, and his supporting actors, do a very fine job of depicting a well-meaning preacher trying to help his troubled flock, but powerless to do so. The problems are treated with more respect and gravitas than in the comics, where misanthropy transformed these characters into jokes. It feels more grown-up.

The trouble is that *Preacher* isn't terribly grown-up to begin with. It's possible that the show will be able to soften Garth Ennis' story for TV while retaining the sense of fun and outrage. It's managed it so far, with the meditative sections resting well enough beside the gory slapstick. Yet while the pilot's slow pace and lack of reveals (barely anything is explicitly identified) have worked well enough so far, they may be a mask for the showrunners' hesitation in getting themselves deep into the quicksand of *Preacher*'s actual plot.

Great cast for a well-executed pilot, but with far too many questions left unanswered to be able to tell what sort of show it'll be going forward, let alone how good it'll be as an adaptation. Let's see if we can get some answers on June 5.



MOVIE REVIEW

Should you sit through 2.5 hours of "X-Men: Apocalypse"?

OPUCALYPSE

I'll start with something that's been bugging me since "X-Men: First Class": Jennifer Lawrence is nice and all but #BringBackRebeccaRomijnAsMystique. Now that it's out of my system, I'll try to provide a somewhat spoiler-free synopsis.

We go back...waaaay back in ancient Egypt [where else?] to find the most powerful and, possibly, the first mutant – En Sabah Nur – being worshipped, but unfortunately for him, his subjects rise up against him and he is interred alive only to be awakened in the wonderful 1980s. He doesn't like what he sees and decides to hit the reboot button on the world. Despite being all-powerful, he still needs help to raze everything to the ground. He recruits four mutants – Storm, Psylocke, Angel and Magneto – as his wingmen and turbocharges their abilities. As the fate of the 1980s hangs in the balance, Mystique and Professor Xavier lead a team of young mutants to stop "Apocalypse" and his "Four Horsemen".

What didn't work for me: Apocalypse, more or less – starting from his appearance to his lines. Apparently, writer-producer Simon Kinberg wanted the titular supervillain to look true to the way he appears in Marvel Comics but I just couldn't take the Ivan Ooze [from

"Power Rangers"] doppelganger who addresses other mutants as "child" seriously. A total waste of Oscar Isaac, an otherwise able actor.

Another issue I had with this film is continuity/aging. We're looking at characters – Mystique, Magneto, Professor Xavier, Quicksilver and CIA agent Moira MacTaggart – who don't seem to have aged a day in 10 years [since "Days of Future Past"]. Quicksilver still lives in his mom's basement.

I was ok with the rest. It's not a crowd-pleaser like "Captain America: Civil War" and the pace is slow at times; I noticed some folks walking out 20/30 minutes before closing credits started to roll at the Star Cineplex premiere. The uninitiated, "I'm just here for the big explosions and one-liners" casual moviegoer may not enjoy this experience. But if you're a fanboy/girl, you won't be disappointed. The build-up may take a while but the pay-off that involves a certain Sansa Stark is more than satisfying. She even delivers self-deprecating humour: "Everyone knows the third movie's always the worst."

The highlight for me was Quicksilver. If you thought he couldn't outdo himself after "Days of Future Past", you're wrong.

In conclusion, yes, "X-Men: Apocalypse" is worth your time. I'd give it a 7.5 out of 10.

