

MOVIE REVIEW

A vibrant, comic-book style illustration of Spider-Man swinging through a city street at night. He is in the center, suspended by his web, with his iconic red and blue suit and spider emblem clearly visible. The background is a dense urban landscape with tall buildings, glowing windows, and a bridge. In the foreground, a yellow taxi and a motorcycle are visible, adding to the sense of motion and city atmosphere. The overall color palette is dominated by blues, purples, and reds, with bright highlights from city lights.

# BEST SPIDER-MAN ANIMATED FILM TO DATE

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**Disclaimer:** Contains spoilers.

If you're of the opinion that Spider-Man has been rebooted too many times in the last two decades, hold onto your hats. The animated adventure *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* introduces no less than seven new versions of the character within a single film.

Miraculously, instead of feeling like too much of a good thing, "*Into the Spider-Verse*" is simply a very good thing. The film captures the sprawling interconnectivity of comic-book universes in a way that no other feature film has. Anything can happen, and it usually does. It's incredibly thrilling to watch, impressively emotional throughout, and easily the best Spider-Man movie since *Spider-Man 2*.

*Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* introduces us Miles Morales, a half-black, half-Latino teenager torn between his overbearing yet good-natured police officer father Jefferson and his more relaxed, sketchier uncle Aaron. While Miles practices his graffiti art with his uncle, he's bitten by a

radioactive spider. We all know what that means.

The problem isn't just that Miles starts sticking to his fellow classmates, or that his inner monologue gets louder (one of the film's most satisfying jokes). The problem is that he stumbles across Spider-Man fighting Kingpin in the middle of a giant inter-dimensional rift device. Miles watches helplessly as Spider-Man dies, and he promises to finish what the hero started, namely to prevent the Kingpin from using the machine again, lest it destroy the world.

While he's wallowing in guilt and self-doubt, Miles stumbles across yet another Peter Parker/Spider-Man, Spider-Gwen, Spider-Noir, Spider-Ham and a SP//dr. 'Spider-Persons' across the multi-verse have been sucked into Miles's reality because of Kingpin's machine, and they need to stop him and return to their own time periods before they blink out of existence.

The plot seems like it should be too much for one film to handle, but *Spider-Verse* wisely stays focused on Miles and his story, and uses all the other characters for support.

Miles Morales is an incredibly captivating new hero, in a story that challenges him in every conceivable way. His powers force upon him an awkward physicality that robs him of his previous confidence. His oath to save the world is such a heavy weight around his shoulders that he always looks ready to collapse. And his loyalties to his family are strained past the breaking point, in a subplot that has the sort of dramatic heft we haven't seen in a superhero film in a very, very long time.

*Spider-Verse* understands all too well that the appeal of Spider-Man is neither the hero's powers nor the tragic back-story. It's the unmistakable sense that the universe has it out for this person, and he or she is going to persevere anyway, through good humor and good intentions. Miles and Peter seem permanently trapped in violent routines, getting hit by cars, falling off buildings, dragged by trains, and hiding their identities behind flimsy excuses.

As hilarious it is and it's easily the funniest Spider-Man movie ever, the film also evokes a greater sense of tragedy than any film in the series since Sam Raimi's original. The heroes are elastic, but life is fragile, and death is very real. If you

include flashbacks, the film has a rather impressive body count. What's more, each of these deaths still motivates the characters left alive, so mortality is always at the forefront of our thoughts, even when the heroes are effortlessly throwing cars around inside a swirling knick-knack vortex of death.

If you've watched the trailers, it goes without saying that animation style sets it apart from other conventional animations. It is an aesthetically jaw-dropping trip across Brooklyn. "*Spider-Verse*" celebrates its print origins with bold graphics and mainstays of comic-book style, including thought balloons, printed words and wavy lines to indicate a tingling Spidey Sense. It's almost as if the characters feel liberated due to these gorgeous animations.

*Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* represents some of the best superhero storytelling on the market. The frenetic animation and freewheeling story offer audiences a sense of boundless dynamism. Watching "*Into the Spider-Verse*" evokes feelings of sitting cross-legged on the floor of your bedroom, eating cookies and immersing yourself in outrageous, mostly inviting new worlds.