

A TIMELESS HERO'S CONFRONTATION WITH ISOLATION

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This review contains spoilers for the film.

Spider-Man: Brand New Day is a reminder as to why Spider-Man is such a multigenerational character that anyone can relate to. Tom Holland delivers his best performance as Peter Parker yet, bringing a much more mature and nuanced chapter in the character's story that delivers on almost all the hype and expectations.

The movie's premise, in simpler terms, follows Peter Parker some years after *Spider-Man: No Way Home*. He's grappling with the absence of Aunt May and the fact that his friends, MJ and Ned, no longer remember anything about him. While he continues to focus on crime-fighting, he comes across a mysterious villain with the ability to control minds.

However, when you break it all down, the story really is about Peter's severe grief and isolation. He tries to mask these issues (both metaphorically and literally) by focusing solely on being a hero, which in turn causes him to undergo physical distress as well, from headaches to rapid mutations in his powers. While this is told through a superhero context, the concept of drowning oneself in work as a coping mechanism instead of dealing with grief and trauma healthily is a very real experience many people go through. Peter's own journey in the film teaches us that it's important to confront that grief rather than avoid it, as that confrontation will ultimately guide us towards overcoming it.

Every supporting character in the story has a significant role that iterates on this theme. The Punisher (Frank Castle) and The Hulk (Bruce Banner) are the two other MCU heroes prominently featured, and they both mirror who Peter is now. Frank is a hero who has lost his entire family, and his war on crime is all he has left. Bruce, on the other hand, is a hero who has managed to control his monstrous mutations and powers.

Meanwhile, MJ and Ned remind Peter of who he used to be. Through these characters, we see Peter's psychological struggle between forcing himself to embrace isolation and wanting to reconnect. The memory of Aunt May plays a crucial role in this dichotomy as well. It is ultimately both the catalyst and resolution of this core emotional conflict. This aspect is pivotal to how the villain is handled as well.



The villain of the film is rather unexpected, as rather than a typical member of Spider-Man's rogues gallery, this time around it is Jean Grey (portrayed by Sadie Sink), a telepathic mutant who is a pivotal member of the X-Men. While her inclusion does feel like a setup for the inevitable MCU X-Men reboot, much like The Punisher and Hulk, her inclusion actually serves a narrative purpose rather than simply being there for a crossover's sake. As such, her story also complements Peter's as the climax of the film has them both simultaneously overcome their separate forms of trauma.

Both tonally and thematically, the movie feels more like a spiritual successor to the Tobey Maguire and Andrew Garfield *Spider-Man* films rather than a continuation of Tom Holland's previous outings. It's not just the plot; rather, *Brand New Day* is a significant step up from the previous MCU Spider-Man trilogy directed by Jon Watts.

The cinematography is the most evident upgrade – be it the lighting and composition of the slower and emotional scenes or the thrilling direction and pace of the faster parts of the film. Moreover, the action sequences and web-swinging scenes might be the best in any Spider-Man film to date, with both taking heavy inspiration from the recent Spider-Man video games. Besides the previous movies and video games, the movie features many references to the comic books as well. Director Destin Daniel Cretton took all the right ingredients and mixed them with his brilliant filmmaking skills to cook the perfect Spider-Man story.

Spider-Man: Brand New Day goes beyond the superhero spectacle to teach us important lessons through Peter Parker. Even if the world doesn't see us, we should not lose sight of who we are. We should learn to reach out instead of suffering in isolation, and confront our grief rather than avoid it. This is what makes Spider-Man a character that continues to resonate with different generations, which is something the film exemplifies.

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