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16-22 MAY 2014

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# IT'S NOT EASY FLEEING GREEN

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INCARNATION  
OF MOVIE  
MONSTER **18**

"Elegant, swellegant... an intimate gem."

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The legendary monster from Japan returns in this summer's "Godzilla." San Francisco is the site of a monster battle between beast and man.

# Waste High

LATEST REMAKE OF 'GODZILLA' DROPS THE BALL ON SO MANY LEVELS IT'S HARD TO KEEP UP

By Christopher Lawrence  
LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

Opponents of the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository may have their most convincing argument yet: "Godzilla."

In this latest reimagining of the classic monster movies, a colossal praying mantis-looking thing is being held, along with all the nation's other radioactive material, deep inside Yucca Mountain. That is, until it hears the

mating call of an even-more-colossal praying mantis-looking thing, bursts out the back of the mountain and crashes through the ceiling of Caesars Palace before laying waste to the Strip.

But moviegoers never actually get to see it turn the city's hotels into its own, personal chew toys. The very next image after its foot hits that first casino floor is an assessment of the damage, up and down the tourist corridor, set to Elvis' "You're the Devil in Disguise."

Small, grainy footage of the beast sending the Eiffel Tower crashing down upon Las Vegas Boulevard eventually turns up on monitors in the background. But given the chance to showcase some serious spectacle along one of

Movie log  
Page 21

the world's most iconic streets, the whole thing feels like a massive wasted opportunity.

But, then, so does much of "Godzilla." Boasting Aaron Taylor-Johnson, Ken Watanabe, Bryan Cranston, Juliette Binoche, Sally Hawkins, Elizabeth Olsen and David Strathairn, "Godzilla's" cast is easily among the summer's best. But director Gareth Edwards ("Monsters") and screenwriter Max Borenstein give them almost nothing to do.

Binoche is barely in it. Olsen just gets to play The Wife and react to things. And while I remember seeing Hawkins, an Oscar nominee this year for "Blue Jasmine," for the life of me I couldn't tell you who her character was or what she was doing there.

It's as though they saved all the

## Review

"Godzilla"

123 minutes

PG-13; intense sequences of destruction, mayhem and creature violence

Grade: **C**

At multiple locations

character stuff for Cranston.

First seen in 1999, Cranston's Joe Brody is an engineer at the nuclear plant in Janjira, Japan. He's been tracking a series of approaching tremors until one fateful morning, on his birthday no less, the plant is leveled, killing his wife (Binoche) and causing the city to be sealed off for a generation.

Fifteen years later, Joe's a mess. Overcome by grief, he's turned into a bit of a crackpot, living in a tiny apartment wallpapered with news clippings,

Continued on Page 19



WARNER BROS. PICTURES

Aaron Taylor-Johnson stars as Ford Brody in the action adventure "Godzilla."

## + Things go horribly wrong in 'Godzilla'

*Continued from Page 18*

maps and charts while sneaking into the quarantine zone that used to be his neighborhood. (And, yes, it feels great seeing the man who'll forever be synonymous with Walter White once again put on a hazmat suit.)

Joe's arrest for trespassing prompts his Navy lieutenant son, Ford (Taylor-Johnson), to fly to Japan to bail him out. From there, the two discover that a giant beast — the one that eventually will summon his mate from Yucca Mountain — is being studied at the abandoned Janjira nuclear site.

Things go horribly wrong, as they are wont to do in movies like this, and the monster, referred to as a MUTO (Massive Unidentified Terrestrial Organism) runs amok, emitting electromagnetic pulses that leave a trail of blackouts in its wake.

The voice of reason in all this is monster expert Dr. Ishiro Serizawa (Watanabe). "Nature has a balance, a power to restore order," he says, and that power, he believes, is Godzilla.

That's pretty much where the logic begins and ends in "Godzilla."

The Navy seems to share Serizawa's belief that the scaly beast can kill the MUTOs. A fleet even follows him to the looming battle in the Bay Area, where the MUTOs are converging. Yet the Navy still tries to destroy Godzilla at every other turn.

Fighter jets also try to take out the

MUTOs, only to end up falling from the sky. Which raises the question of why they were in the air in the first place when everyone involved knows that the monsters fry everything electronic.

And who, exactly, thought it was a good idea to try to take out the monsters with a massive nuclear device right outside San Francisco?

"Godzilla" would have made a terrific striptease artist, as it ever-so-slowly reveals itself. Fight scenes are cut short. There's a glimpse of carnage here, a short burst of action there. But for long stretches, the movie just sort of happens in front of you, only rarely drawing you in.

Taylor-Johnson's Ford, trained in explosive ordnance disposal, tries to save the day in a series of uninspired set pieces. There's a tidal wave that doesn't do much to one-up the tsunami in the far-less-expensive "The Impossible." "Godzilla" was even beaten to the giant-monster punch by last summer's "Pacific Rim," which at least balanced its mayhem with a sense of humor.

The movie finally sputters to life at the end when Godzilla takes on the MUTOs in a two-on-one handicap match, as the three monsters topple the San Francisco skyline like so many drunks playing Jenga.

But, too often, "Godzilla" blows smoke when it should be breathing fire.

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# Hardy in complete command through 'Locke's' twists, turns

By Ann Hornaday  
THE WASHINGTON POST

**I**van Locke has a cold. The Birmingham construction manager and title character of "Locke" — who, from the sound of his accent, arrived in England by way of Wales — is leaving work on an otherwise ordinary night when, instead of turning left to go home, he turns



A24 FILMS

Tom Hardy stars in "Locke," a taut thriller written and directed by Steven Knight.

## Review

"Locke"

85 minutes

R; profanity throughout

Grade: **A**

At Village Square

right. After placing a call to an unknown person on the other end ("I'm on my way; I'll get there"), Locke commences a 90-minute drive to London, captured in virtually real time over the course of a movie that unfolds like one of the great radio dramas of yore — with the incalculable added value of the great Tom Hardy, here masterfully carrying a taut, engrossing one-man show.

The reason for Locke's sudden change of mind becomes clear within the first several minutes of "Locke," but in a movie in which every second counts, even that early detail counts as a spoiler. Suffice it to say that the parameters of Locke's life — the mission he's on, the enormous concrete pour he's supposed to oversee the next day, the wife and two sons expecting him any minute to watch a highly anticipated soccer match — all come into blade-sharp focus as Locke places and receives a series of increasingly emotional phone calls.

With every conversation, Locke's own temperament comes into view, like the oncoming cars in his blurry windshield. Punctilious, conscientious, powered by belief in his own rectitude and practicality, Locke is a soft-spoken, even modestly elegant man, at least until those moments when, overwhelmed by the cascading effects he's set in motion, he lets loose with a shouted vulgarity or diatribe against an unseen ghost in the backseat. (Much like another well-constructed thriller, Jeremy Saulnier's "Blue Ruin," "Locke" turns out to be a portrait of a man either trying to outrun

or heal his own past.)

Written and directed by Steven Knight — the superb writer behind "Dirty Pretty Things" and "Eastern Promises" — "Locke" is so distilled, such a pure example of cinematic storytelling, that it almost feels abstract. In many ways, the movie feels like the reply to a question: What would happen if we pared down moviemaking to its simplest, most elemental bones?

In the hands of a virtuoso such as Hardy, the answer is a riveting exercise in voice, facial expression and that mysterious X factor known as charisma, that ineffable command presence that grabs the audience by its collective throat and never, ever slips.

Knight occasionally breaks away from Hardy's face, capturing the sheen of the car's reflective surfaces, then returns to a man bathed in the jaundiced glow of streetlights and his own sickened realization that the life he has so carefully constructed is on the brink of implosion. Then there's that cold medicine he swigs as the car makes its way on the rain-slicked highway.

Despite Locke's studiously even-tempered attempts to hold himself accountable for his decisions (his soothing tones recall Richard Burton at his most incantatory), the tension keeps inexorably building, thanks in large part to Knight's own canny command of pacing, structure and tone. But in terms of emotion, it's Hardy alone who has made us care about how things work out for Locke. Indeed, it's only in the final moments of his fateful journey that we realize we were invested the moment he chose to make that right-hand turn instead of left.