

"Defendor" Fails To Save the Day

Written by Dave Howard



Some things sound really great on paper. Woody Harrelson plays a local simpleton who dresses up as the superhero, "Defendor" at night. Donning a duct tape logo, a mason jar of bees as his weapon and Christian Bale's "Dark Night" growl, he takes to the night in search of his archenemy, Captain Industry. The fact that he doesn't really know who Captain Industry is doesn't deter him. The film's uneven journey switches from a satire of vigilantism to a dark comedy to a tragedy. None of the genres are explored enough to make the flick work.

Arthur Poppington (Harrelson) is a slow witted, man-child traffic director at a construction site. At night, he sleeps in the company's garage which he has fashioned into his headquarters. He dons black tights and a painted hard hat then combs the street for evil doers. Unwittingly, he busts an corrupt undercover cop, Chuck Dooney (Elias Koteas), who is trading crack for hummers to the local teenage working girl, Kat. (Kat Dennings). Arthur rescues Kat and moves her into his lair. The cop soon has his high level drug thugs searching for the Non-Caped Crusader (because "capas are for flying"). We learn that Defendor's absent mother was also a hooker with a drug and/or drinking problem. Kat, seeking a crack meal ticket for a while, convinces him that Captain Industry is actually the mafia chieftain and Dooney has joined forces with him. With not as much as bulletproof vest Defendor goes after the Uzi toting scumbags.

The one saving grace of this movie is that the two leads are really likable. Woody and Kat do the best with the material they have. When Defendor faces off against the bad guys, you can

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see Harrelson busting at the seams to take the role to the next level. Regrettably, the director did not see this potential. Dennings is cheery as the crack addicted hooker. Yes, cheery. While her character is constantly hitting the rock, she shows absolutely no signs of getting lit or more importantly, withdrawal from her crippling addictions. Near the conclusion, she throws away her pipe as if it was no more than a stick of gum.

The uneven pacing, story and characterizations are all the brain child of neophyte director, Peter Stebbings. He simply couldn't decide what kind of movie he wanted to make. Was this supposed to be a dark "Pretty Woman" or a comedic "Taxi Driver?" Considering his complete lack of comic timing and the cynical "Get It?" ending, I'm really not sure.

"Defendor" was good idea but definitely the plot was not well masterminded.