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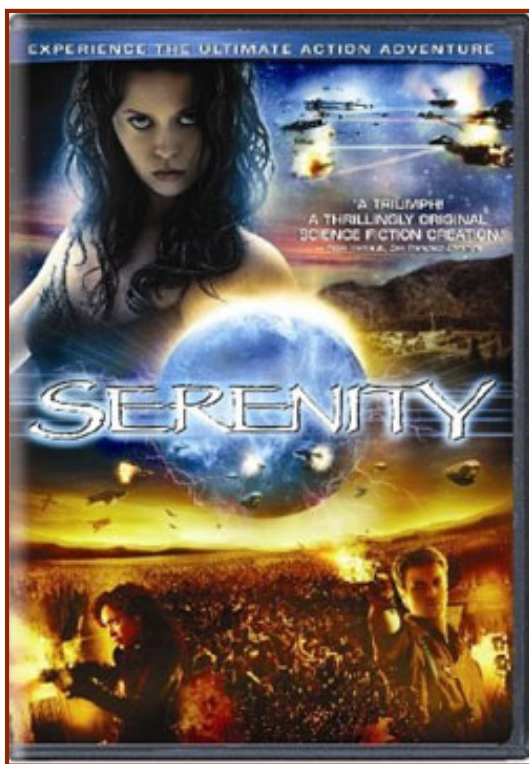
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▶▶ **Movie DVD Reviews**

Serenity (Widescreen Edition)

Rated PG-13 » Grade: A-

by Michael C. Sherrin
 EDGE Entertainment Contributor
 Saturday Jan 7, 2006



ragtag team on bank robberies and futuristic train heists. Taking place untold years in the future, humans migrated to a larger solar system with hundreds of planets and moons. The Alliance governed the system until the outer planets revolted causing a civil war. The Alliance won and Mal, a volunteer on the losing side, tries to keep his distance.

Movie plots, however, have a way of complicating things as Mal takes brother and sister passengers, Simon (Sean Maher) and River (Summer Glau), only to find out they are being hunted by the Alliance.

Now, un-scrunch your nose as this is anything but a cliché. Serenity appeases and snickers at the genre clichés while giving you more than your average award season drama. For all the space duels and bar fights, Whedon fleshes out disturbed and fascinating characters who justify a space adventure without aliens or lasers (they carry actual bullet shooting revolvers).

These characters are smart and, thanks to Whedon's unmatched genre wit, say the things you always want to say from knowing when "it's a trap" to laughing at muscle-bound Jayne getting beat up by a 90 pound girl.

Mal doesn't play the reluctant hero. He doesn't even want to be the hero. The Operative (Chiwetel Ejiofor), who leads the hunt for River and her brother, doesn't posture and gloat. He's a soldier with a mission.

The man-eating Reavers are on one side of the door while our heroes wait for the final battle. Tensions are high as death is pretty certain.

Zoe says, "Do you really think any of us are gonna get through this?"

Jayne answers, "I might."

Joss Whedon, the creator of "Buffy the Vampire Slayer", brings his sci-fi/cowboy series "Firefly" to big screen (renamed **Serenity** for the movies) after being canceled midseason. While the sales pitch needs work, Whedon's film rejuvenates the phenomenal, though short-lived, series for believers and non-believers alike with his brilliant ear for dialogue and flair with captivating characters, all played by the original series' cast.

Mal (Nathan Fillion) captains the ship Serenity with his

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Mal says to the Operative, "I don't murder children."

The Operative answers, "I do."

Whedon's especially shines melding real characters into character-driven action sequences that live up to the banter. The bar fight make Buffy look like a prima donna scared to break a nail. Glau, playing River, erupts in with a bevy of kicks and leaps and such, performing most of her own stunts, which Whedon points out in the commentary, comes from her dancing experience.

He recalls the stunt coordinator telling him, "She can kick a guy from behind around a poll. Can we build a poll? I said yes I think we can."

So, simply put: get/rent this DVD. Fall in love with soon-to-be cult classic characters. Then try to resist getting the series DVD. Now, let us all pray for "Arrested Development: Bigger, Longer and Uncut," in theaters fall of 2007.

Special Features

With a small budget and Whedon's dry humor, Serenity's lone disc offers insight and education about bringing a dream to reality pre-Wonder Woman budget ceilings. Three featurettes glimpse at the makings-of and set designs and giving at least a taste of how Whedon got an estimated \$40 million movie made on a failed TV series. The best part comes from Whedon himself who replaces ego with fanboy excitement. He describes his inspiration for the Serenity world as after reading the book Killer Angel's about Gettysburg. He becomes obsessed with life in the frontier which, as he puts it: "That, of course, makes me think of Millennium Falcon, because most things do." "Re-Lighting the Firefly," about how the movie came from the show, focuses on the rabid fans who through DVD purchases and continuous loyalty helped green light the movie. As Whedon says, he isn't trying to make something people like. He wants to make something people love.

A freelance writer and editor, Michael can be contacted at MikeCS83@yahoo.com or through his website at <http://mikecs.95mb.com/>.

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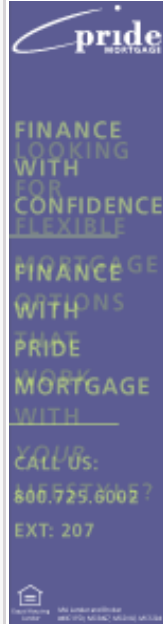
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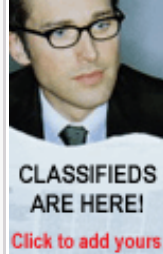


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