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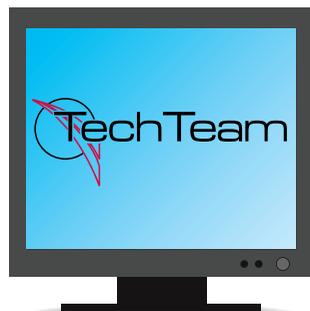
Matt Passmore of 'The Glades' keeps his cool

Matt Passmore stars in "The Glades"
Sundays on A&E Network.

See Page 4 for more details.



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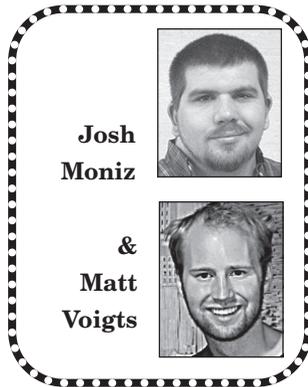

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Double Take: *Transformers: Dark of the Moon*

Matt: Make it stop please
Josh: A clunky vehicle you should trade in

Matt: Throughout his Transformers trilogy, director Michael Bay has embraced the mindset of a child. Not so much a child filled with creativity and wonderment, but a deeply troubled brat, mind dazed by AD-HD on a drug-addled bender destroying your living room. While the first “Transformers” was serviceable as stupid summer fun, parts 2 and 3 have gleefully struggled against making any – ANY – kind of sense. “Dark of the Moon” isn’t quite as insane as 2009’s “Revenge of the Fallen,” but it’s still an unentertaining mess that insults its audience with its laziness and incoherence.

The difference between “Revenge” and “Moon” is that in the latter, I can tell which human and robots are running which way and what they are being chased by. What’s still missing is why. Soldiers on both sides of the robo-human war throw themselves into mortal danger without any sense of goal. Their personalities shift wildly between scenes and sometimes in the middle of them. Backstories are mentioned once and never again (new girlfriend’s brother what?). The transformation



Josh
Moniz

&
Matt
Voigts

scenes and robot fights are muddled messes that don’t give any sense of physicality. And all the while, the visual pace keeps rolling at a distracted-by-shiny-objects rate and rhythm. Also, as far as family viewing goes, it’s kind of disturbing the casualness these robots (good and bad) display as they gun down their enemies point-blank execution style.

Believe me, I wanted to enjoy this. I like it when robots go smash. I like explosions. But action doesn’t feel exciting unless you have a reason to care. In “Dark of the Moon,” as with “Revenge of the Fallen,” there is little tension because despite the action, there’s little “conflict” in the sense that you don’t know or care what anyone is trying to do, how, why, or what logical impediments may stand in their way (except on the level of “other, opposing robots”).

The machine Transformers most reminds me of most is a food processor. While explosions and robots and spaceships seem inherently



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appealing, Bay just hits ‘puree’ and blends them all together into gobblety-gook, a boring, flat gruel in a two-and-a-half hours-sized bowl.

Josh: I probably take the most issue with this film because of how long it is. The first three-fourths of the film are just a pointless mess used to set the last action scene. If Michael Bay wants to just shoot action, then make the film just under an hour and a half so that people can get what they came for and get out.

Like Matt says, no matter how big the action scene get, you can’t enjoy them if you don’t care about the people (or robots) involved.

Bay seems to somewhat grasp this, but doesn’t seem to care enough to actually work at it. As a result, he just slaps comedy, drama and, oddly, horror at the screen without any consistency of tone or setup. It’s almost like he’s throwing things to see

what sticks.

For example, the leader of the Autobots (the good robots) is Optimus Prime. He was somewhat interesting in the first film because not only was he a powerful warrior, but he was willing to go to great, difficult lengths to avoid conflict. It’s only when it was unavoidable did he deliver the smackdown. In this film, he immediately jumps to screaming, “We’ll kill them all.” Similarly, the brutality in which the good guys take out the bad guys is short-sighted. It’s intended to be exciting when a head gets pulled off, but it just makes you feel uncomfortable because the robotic characters are human shaped.

I could probably also go on rant about the girlfriend character has absolutely no personality outside of being eye candy, but that would be cliché considering it’s a Michael Bay film. What’s more interesting is how American soldiers are

treated like eye candy. They don’t actually manage to take down a single enemy robot on their own, despite constantly walking into danger they need to be rescued from by the Autobots. All they do is stand around in a way that allows them to show off some high tech military gun or gear. It’s like erotica for patriotism.

There are bits where Bay’s handy work shines. The battle through and around a skyscraper that was snapped in half is interesting and creative. The 3D is also better implemented than I’ve seen in a film in a while. But, the few positives don’t even come close to making up for the negatives.

Matt: If one is willing to give the movie too much credit, he or she could view the human soldiers’ lack of purpose in the film’s final act as a commentary on a decade of ill-fated military excursions. Yet by my reckoning, “eye candy” seems to be the most explanatory descriptor of the movie’s “ideology.” It doesn’t appear to like soldiers because they defend our freedoms, nor does it question the authenticity with which the Autobots raid a place identified only as “Middle East – Illegal Nuclear Site.” Bay just seems to like throwing soldiers at the robots because doing so makes for wicked cool explosions, which he proceeds to do with a disturbingly fetishistic enthusiasm. Regardless of your political

leanings, if you believe war involves issues of morality, this movie ought to make you really, really uncomfortable.

Josh: If this film was a car, you’d have buyer’s remorse.

Matt: As a work of narrative or even as a simple ‘action movie’, “Transformers 3” fails on nearly every level, and is significant only as a document of the downfall of Western Civilization.

Matt: 1.5/10, Josh: 3/10

Synopsis:

The Autobots – benevolent robots from another planet who can morph into vehicles – are busy working full-time for the United States government, keeping the world safe from terrorists. Meanwhile, their human friend Sam Witwicky has graduated college and is looking for a job. Both are about to face new and old foes as secrets are revealed tied to the 1960s space race and a robot spaceship crash-landed on the moon.

Director: Michael Bay
Writer: Ehren Kruger
Starring: Shia LaBeouf, Rosie Huntington-Whiteley, John Turturro

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