

# Diversions



## Opening tomorrow:

### ■ *Mister Lonely*

Starring: Diego Luna, Samantha Morton, Werner Herzog, David Blaine, Anita Pallenberg

### ■ *Fugitive Pieces*

Starring: Rosamund Pike, Stephen Dillane, Rade Serbedzija, Rachel Lefevre, Larissa Laskin

ARTS

MUSIC

LIVING

MOVIES

WEEKEND

REVIEW | IRONMAN

# WELL-MADE MAN

An updated plot and a great performance from Robert Downey Jr. make *Iron Man* worth seeing

BY COURTNEY POMEROY  
Staff writer

There is no old woman spouting words of corny wisdom in *Iron Man*, no redhead who is always in need of rescuing and, best of all, no supernatural hero trying to avenge anyone's death. There is, however, a badass scientist who just wants to get his kill on.

Robert Downey Jr. stars in this updated version of the comic book classic, and with his sarcastic, successful performance, *Iron Man* kicks off the summer's blockbuster season in a hard-to-ignore way.

Tony Stark (Downey Jr., *Charlie Bartlett*) is the womanizing CEO of his dead father's weapons company and the mastermind behind every missile, bomb and weapon of mass destruction it creates. But his genius turns on him when he goes overseas to present a demo of his most recent weapon. When leaving the testing site, his convoy is ambushed and Stark is taken captive.

When he regains consciousness, he finds Yinsen (Shaun Toub, *The Kite Runner*), the man being held prisoner with him, has lodged a large electromagnet into Stark's chest in order to keep the metal pieces of shrapnel away from his heart. Not long afterward, Stark is asked by his captors to replicate the very weapon he had been showing off in the desert before he was taken hostage. When he is presented with boxes of his own company's products to build it with, he realizes the weapons he created for the American forces have somehow fallen into the hands of their enemies — and he's pissed about it.

Although the captors promise to let him go if he builds the missile, Stark assumes they are lying and instead goes to work building a rough draft of Iron Man, an iron suit that will run on the brand-new battery-powered magnet in his chest. Three months after he is first taken into captivity, he walks out of the makeshift workshop (a.k.a. random cave) covered in crude — yet still terrifying — metal armor. He manages to get away, and once he's back in the States he decides to make a change in his company, starting with his prototype.

Once Stark is out of the life-or-death situation, Downey brings a sense of personality to the superhero character. He has a quick wit with his assistant Pepper (Gwyneth Paltrow, *The Good Night*), his best friend Jim (Terrence Howard, *The Perfect Holiday*) and even with himself. While slaving away in his workshop, tediously trying to perfect the suit's capabilities, he works with a number of robots that

don't speak but almost become characters because of the way he interacts with them.

Once Stark's design is complete, the story really begins to unfold, and we learn that Iron Man doesn't mess around. Because of his hyper-efficient weapons, it is impossible for his enemies to take people hostage, and there is no mythical "Kryptonite" to slow him down. His Terminatoresque appearance is more intimidating than any spandex suit, and sends the correct message — he is there to fight, and he will probably win.

The fight scenes don't look fake, and the battle scenes excel, in stark contrast to last year's summer blockbuster *Transformers*, in which action sequences fell flat. Although there are some fights during which metal faces off against metal, the scenes are exciting and dynamic in a way *Transformers* never was.

Another aspect of *Iron Man* that will keep audiences interested is the use of modern-day events in the superhero's narrative. Though comic books have taken a turn toward the present-day — for example, Frank Miller's Batman is off fighting terrorists in the Middle East — most genre films have stayed buried in the past, without a whisper of current events. However, *Iron Man*'s reference of everything from the war in Iraq to MySpace makes the film not only more relevant to today's audiences but also more enjoyable.

While Downey steals the show, the characters surrounding Stark also add a lot of spunk to the story line. Although Paltrow doesn't appear too often, she is funny and sharp-tongued when she does, and Howard and Downey have a clear comical chemistry. Jeff Bridges, who plays Stark's older business partner, Obadiah, is hardly recognizable with his shaved head and thick beard, but he does a great job playing a jolly but suspicious man with a thirst for money and power. And in one of the best-played cameos in a long time, *Iron Man* creator Stan Lee appears as Hugh Hefner during one red carpet scene.

Director Jon Favreau (before this, he directed 2003's *Elf* with Will Farrell) may be new to the superhero genre, but he is already upping the ante for Marvel movies to come. In fact, he's already planning for two *Iron Man* sequels, and all of the main characters have signed on for both. With a first installment as good as this one, let's hope production goes quickly enough to kick off next summer's blockbuster season with a bang.

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## CRUCIAL SUPPORTERS



PEPPER POTTS (GWYNETH PALTROW)



JIM RHODES (TERRENCE HOWARD)

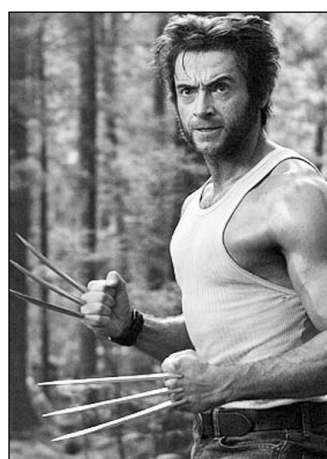


OBADIAH STANE (JEFF BRIDGES)

MOVIE: Iron Man | VERDICT:



Need more graphic violence in your life? These films are coming up:



### X-MEN ORIGINS: WOLVERINE

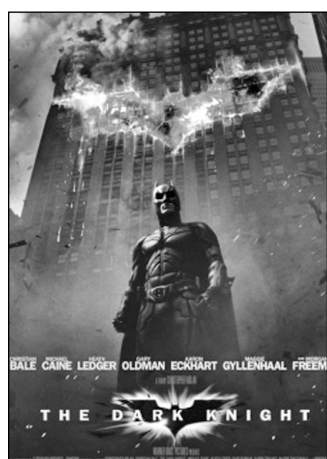
TENTATIVE RELEASE: May 1, 2009

#### HYPED FOR:

Hugh Jackman's awesomeness. This prequel should be nothing short of fantastic.

#### DETAILS:

Wolverine isn't the only X-Men member getting a prequel — *Magneto* is currently being written, and rumors are Sir Ian McKellan is already signed on.



### THE DARK KNIGHT

RELEASE: July 18, 2008

#### HYPED FOR:

Christian Bale is the best Batman the franchise has had in years. Also, Heath Ledger. Enough said.

#### DETAILS:

The film's final trailer is supposed to come out next week, but it's already leaked on the Internet. Sweet!



### SIN CITY 2

TENTATIVE RELEASE: TBA

#### HYPED FOR:

*Sin City* received tons of critical praise in 2005, and the possibility that Angelina Jolie may star in *Sin City 2* is a lot to get excited about.

#### DETAILS:

The film's script has been written, but because of Robert Rodriguez's involvement in *Barbarella*, production has stalled. Boo!



### HELLBOY 2

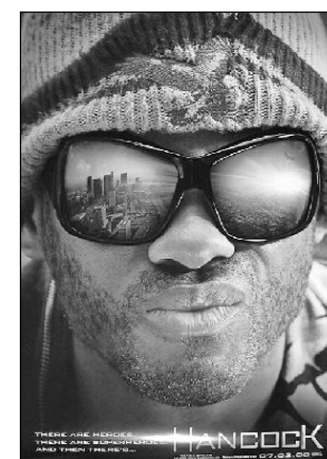
TENTATIVE RELEASE: July 11, 2008

#### HYPED FOR:

Can Guillermo del Toro do any wrong? After the smash that was *Pan's Labyrinth*, fans of the director have anxiously waited for *Hellboy 2*.

#### DETAILS:

Del Toro wants to create a third *Hellboy*, but he also wants to recreate *Frankenstein*, *Dracula* and *The Wolf Man*. Baller.



### HANCOCK

TENTATIVE RELEASE: July 2, 2008

#### HYPED FOR:

A funny superhero movie that isn't based on any kind of comic book? Intriguing — and Will Smith can only help, right?

#### DETAILS:

Smith as an alcoholic superhero hated by most of the public is a definite change from his typical roles, and could be either great ... or disastrous.