



TRANSCRIPT

Cinema Review – Robin Hood, and Iron Man 2

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Today I will look at two superhero movies – located in time about eight hundred years apart. Firstly, the latest version of the enduring legend of *Robin Hood* and then the much more recent legend of *Iron Man*.

Robin Hood is a tried and tested story and there are, perhaps, no real surprises to be had there. However, this latest version – with its all-Australian headline cast of Russell Crowe and Cate Blanchett – makes a valiant attempt at giving the old story a new gloss by setting out to tell us where Robin came from before he wound up being pursued by the evil Sheriff of Nottingham. So this movie is a kind of prequel.

Is anything gained by giving this old, old yarn a slightly new twist? Unfortunately the answer is no. *Robin Hood* is a drab, lifeless movie which just doesn't seem to have had any compelling reason to have been made. I came away with the impression that this was a brown-coloured movie: the landscapes are brown; the costumes are brown and, if dialogue could have a colour, then it too would be seen as a very dull, brown: the colour of mud.

It's a movie that has an old-fashioned feel to it while, at the same time, it is desperately in need of some of the good old-fashioned "derring do" which has characterised other versions of the Robin Hood tale down the years.

Russell Crowe's earnest portrayal of the legendary do-gooder is as wooden as a cigar store Indian. If Crowe's eminent Aussie precursor, Errol Flynn, could have made a ghostly re-appearance on the set I'm sure he would have taken Rusty aside and advised him: "Come on, Mate – what about a bit of swashbuckling?"

No such luck. Instead, the movie just plods about like an old cow in a very muddy paddock. The only real highlight of the movie is Cate Blanchett's performance as the feisty Lady Marion. She does her best with what she's been given to work with – and that's not saying much – but, such is her great skill, that she still manages to light up the screen with her presence whenever she's given the opportunity.

But even Cate can't save this movie from sinking under the weight of its own gloom. When the movie finally came to an end I was left thinking : Why bother? Why go to all that trouble and expense to fabricate some silly medieval history when there must be loads of really interesting stories out there just begging to be told?

I gave Robin Hood one and a half stars - and most of that was for Cate Blanchett.

Now, let's zoom forward eight hundred years or so through time to another superhero – Iron Man – having his second outing on the big screen in *Iron Man 2*. I haven't read a lot of comics since I turned 21 so this particular superhero was something of a mystery to me until I saw the first Iron Man movie a couple of years ago.

Wow! That was just terrific! Edgy, with an element of conspiracy theory, inventive, action-packed, loaded with tension and with a superhero who has real vulnerability. At the end of this movie there was a little trailer for the sequel and I immediately started looking forward to the next instalment.

Maybe my expectations were raised a little too high because *Iron Man 2* did not seem to take off and fly like the first one. Some of my disappointment was probably inevitable. For me – not having read the comics - the first movie had many surprises. I found it quite engrossing to watch the engineering genius, brilliantly portrayed by Robert Downey Junior as, with trial and error, he developed his remarkable suit of body armour. Downey's total embodiment of the character made it all, well, believable.

Iron Man 2 lacks this element of surprise and what we are left with is our iron-clad superhero going after some more baddies – with greater or lesser dedication to his job of saving the world. I guess beginnings are a hard act to follow – unless it happens to be Robin Hood's beginnings. However, there's still a part of me that remains loyal to Iron Man and – despite my reservations - there are quite a lot of good sequences in *Iron Man 2*. Robert Downey Junior is always watchable and there's a cameo from Scarlett Johansson as a kick-boxing FBI agent which is guaranteed to get the pulse racing.

It's just that, as a whole, it doesn't hold together as tightly as its predecessor. I gave it two and a half stars. And, yes, I stayed for the little trailer at the end for *Iron Man 3* and, yes, I *am* looking forward to this one already. Maybe *it* will regain some of the spark which Number Two lacks.

Well, goodbye for now. I'll see you in the back stalls.