



Warcraft: The Beginning



OUT NOW / RATED M / 123 MINS.

DIRECTOR Duncan Jones

CAST Travis Fimmel, Paula Patton, Toby Kebbell, Ben Foster

PLOT With their own world dying, a race of Orcs pass through a magical portal into the land of Azeroth. Led by a despotic warlock, the Orcs try to conquer Azeroth, but one among their number wants to broker peace.

WHERE DOES ONE EVEN START

in turning the world of *World Of Warcraft* into a movie? Played by millions but a mystery to millions more, the game has countless characters of all sorts of fantastical races — dwarves, elves, werewolves, ghouls. It has no specific plot and no end point.

That Duncan Jones, who penned complex narratives in *Moon* and *Source Code*, has managed to herd all its random elements into a story that, just about, coheres is impressive. Also, it's clear that every frame has been passionately crafted.

However, it's unfortunate that, like the ugly green baby who becomes central to its plot, the result is a hard thing for

anyone but its creators to love.

Condensing this sprawling universe into a few words is tough, and the movie struggles to squeeze it into two hours. Via a giant stone doorway, a tribe of Orcs comes to the land of Azeroth, looking to claim it as their new home. One Orc, Durotan (Toby Kebbell), a new father, rebels against his power-hungry leader Gul'dan (Daniel Wu) and tries to establish a truce with the king (Dominic Cooper). Naturally, it doesn't go to plan and there is much battling.

There are far too many lead characters, the result being that none is given time to expand beyond an archetype. This becomes a particular problem when Jones starts killing them off; it's hard to feel grief for those who feel like passing acquaintances.

So much effort is expended keeping every sub-plot heading in the same direction that Jones has no time to breathe. For a film in which a sizeable proportion of its cast is green, it takes itself fairly seriously. If this is going to be the beginning, hopefully the next movie chapter of *Warcraft* will remember to deliver the fun too.

OLLY RICHARDS

VERDICT The ambition is laudable, but it's to little end. At once empty and impenetrable, this brings to mind a mix of *John Carter* and *Dungeons & Dragons*, regrettably in both themes and level of enjoyment.

No, he had made the right choice to fly.



BONUS FEATURE

CRAFTING WARCRAFT DIRECTOR DUNCAN JONES ON GOING BLOCKBUSTER AND SPEAKING ORCISH...

How has it been jumping from smaller films like *Moon* and *Source Code* to something massive like *Warcraft*?

Well you know, I surrounded myself with a lot of great people, so that really made it a lot better. And I'm glad that I did at least have *Source Code*, which was kind of a chance to dip my toe into the water as far as studio filmmaking goes. *Moon* was a small, independent film and *Source Code* was a decent step up, and back then I'd sort of seen what Chris Nolan had done as far as going from a much smaller film in *Memento*, and then doing *Insomnia*, which was his next one, with Al Pacino. And then from that going into the giant world of the Batman movies. So I thought, well that seems like a sensible approach, so you know, I did my little one, then I did my slightly bigger one, and then jumped into this guy.

You're dealing with a dense mythology. Has it been difficult making that accessible to a general audience?

You know, that's the job, and I think there are 20 years of stories that have been told in *Warcraft*, and I think what we wanted to do was go right back to the very beginning of those stories, to that initial meeting of these two cultures, orc and human. So by going back to the very beginning actually simplified it an awful lot. Nineteen years' worth of writing hadn't been done yet with our original story, so it kinda simplified things. And then again, my job as a filmmaker is to take those initial elements and find a way to make it work as a film.

Can you tell us more about your next film project, *Mute*?

That's an independent sci-fi film that I've been trying to make since before *Moon*, my first film, came out. It's very different, it's very dark, and you know it actually has a pretty good sense of humour to it as well, but it's one of those things that's just been an absolute challenge to get made. I think we've finally found the way to do it, and it will be with Paul Rudd, Ant-Man, and Alexander Skarsgard, Tarzan, [Laughs] and hopefully it'll be happening quite soon, we'll sort of know for sure in the next week or two. We would disappear off to Berlin and start shooting it before the end of the year.

Finally, can you speak any Orcish?

[Laughs] No, I'm not very good at it! Rob Kazinsky [*Doomhammer*] is a natural. I think cos he looks half-Orc. **JAMES JENNINGS**