

Spider-Man 3 Film Review:

How long can any man fight the darkness...before he finds it in himself?



Plot Summary

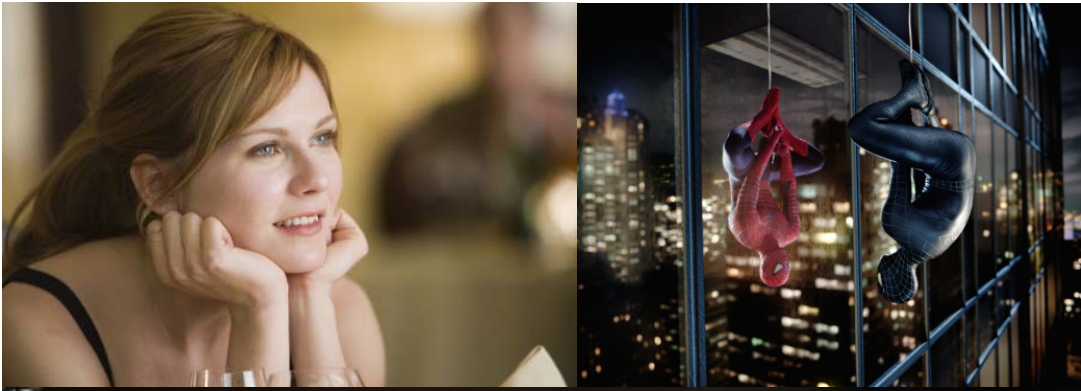
Peter Parker has finally found the balance he's longed for between his love for Mary Jane Watson and his responsibilities as Spider-Man. The city of New York and its citizens are at last coming around and appreciating everything he has done as his crime-fighting alter ego, and Peter is in the running for a staff job at the Daily Bugle. However, everything Peter has worked for is about to unravel. Flint Marko, while fleeing prison, is caught in an accident that displaces molecules and is transformed into the Sandman, a new super villain who is able to change his body into any shape of sand he sees fit. When Peter learns of a connection between The Sandman and the murder of his Uncle Ben, he will stop at nothing as Spider-Man to capture him. But before Peter can do so he discovers a mysterious black substance has turned his suit black, and has brought forth a darker side of Parker and Spidey nobody has seen before. Peter begins to give into this new dark personality, starts to abandon the ones he loves the most and in turn his best friend Harry Osborn takes up his late father's mantle as The New Goblin. Quickly Parker begins a new romance with his lab partner, the beautiful Gwen Stacy but in doing so Peter sets off a rival Bugle photographer, a troubled young man by the name of Eddie Brock who is obsessed with Stacy. Little does Peter know the black substance has its sights set on Eddie else as well. Turning Brock into Venom, a foe that mirrors everything Spider-Man can do. Forcing Peter to become the strong-willed hero he has forgotten about if he hopes to defeat his greatest threat yet.

Written by: **Phatmaster (edited by Anonymous)...**www.imdb.com



Let me put my five Money Train film review thoughts on **Spider-Man 3**.

1st, Spider-Man 3 is now one of the best superhero films ever made. I have to say that before I saw *Spidey 3* I was content with believing that **Batman Begins** was the top dawg in the superhero action flick genre. I kept saying after *Spidey 2* that it was damn good, but not better than *Batman Begins*. So I did not expect *Spidey-3* to have me sitting on the edge of my seat throughout the whole film. Sam Raimi was working his cinematic voodoo at the highest level. I mean what makes a superhero film great, like *Superman*, *Superman II*, *X-Men 2*, *Batman*, *Conan*, is the ability to be faithful to its comic book roots while still expanding the hero's myth into new heights. That is what happens when one watches *Spider-Man 3*. One finally gets to see the dark side of Peter Parker which was missing in the first two hero angst driven films. This time we get to enjoy seeing Peter Parker fully accepting he is a superhero and believing he deserves respect and accolades from the citizens that he daily protects.



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2nd, *Spider-Man 3* has enough subplots and drama going on to rival any popular TV soap opera. But it is these multitude of storylines that finally pushes the film back to what made the Spider-Man comic books so great in the 60's, 70's and 80's. Peter's love life is supposed to be as complicated as his life as Spider-Man the hero. What makes *Spidey 3* different than its predecessors is that it allowed Kirsten Dunst as Mary Jane and James Franco to finally develop into full characters and not just hang around in Spidey's shadow. Mary Jane is at ease with her much beloved superhero boyfriend while she is a Broadway star. Once Mary Jane is fired after musical's big opening night, then her confidence is stripped away. Mary Jane actually becomes a Spidey hater. No scene makes Mary Jane more like a real woman than her breaking down Peter Parker in a fancy French restaurant. It is in this "supposedly" romantic setting that Mary Jane meets Gwen Stacey and then--uncharacteristically to the previous two *Spideys*--goes off on Peter Parker. Mary shows her jealous side and accuses Peter trying to hide Gwen from her and of letting Gwen do their special upside down Spidey kiss. Mary Jane makes Peter realize he is more into being Spider-Man than about her feelings. This is classic Spider-Man where a Batman or Superman do not have these type of emotional and dramatic personal dilemmas. And having Mary Jane kissing Harry first only gives her character way more depth.

James Franco has grown the most in the three *Spidey* films. Harry Osborn is Peter's best friend and also his biggest threat. Harry wants to avenge the death of his father at any cost to himself. James Franco knows Peter Parker is Spider-Man and instead of immediately exposing his former best friend he is seething for the moment to kill him. When we see Franco attack Peter Parker and not in his Spider-Man costume, he yells out to Spidey that, "you knew this was coming Pete". A bump on his head and a little amnesia forces Franco to again be a loyal best friend of Peter. But even as his friend he cannot still help be attracted to his woman. And the kiss between him and Mary Jane is what he has wanted for a long time. But it is Franco who is at his best when he has coffee with Peter. Harry calmly tells Peter with a deadpan tone and lazy eye that he stole Mary Jane from him. Franco later redeems himself with Spidey audiences by being so viciously beaten down by Venom/Spidey that he is no longer considered the same deadly threat at the start of the film. The only characters in *Spidey 3* that had no development at all are J.T. Simmons and Bill Nunn. It is beyond dumb for Sam Raimi to show a mellow J. Jonah Jameson giving up being devoted to destroying Spider-Man. Jonah would never have printed a retraction on a bad Spidey story. Jameson should have destroyed all the goodwill that Spidey built up. It would be better for the franchise to have Spidey reduced back to an outcast and hunted by the police. Gwen Stacey and Betty Brant did not do anything at all in *Spidey 3* worth discussing in this review. They will probably do more in later films.







3rd, The villains in *Spider-Man 3* are all “off the hook”. From the new and improved skateboard flying Hobgoblin, to the shape shifting Sandman and the deadly and Joker like Venom. *Spidey-3*'s opening montage of the previous two Spidey films lets the viewer pick up tension wise right where *Spidey-2* ended. So we do not lose much time momentum in the storyline, which has never been done well with most superhero sequels. We feel Hobgoblin's pain as he tries to kill Peter first in an intense aerial fight and later face to face in Osborn's penthouse. This later fight is actually between two villains as Harry is fighting Venom/Spidey. Nothing is colder than seeing Parker sarcastically mock Harry after he won and ask if little Hobgoblin is going to cry. And to top it off Venom/Spidey has no mercy as he blows up Harry with his own Hobgoblin bomb. In fact, Peter Parker was a fourth villain in *Spidey 3*.

Sandman is clearly one of the best Spider-Man villains to come to life on the screen. His shape shifting and nearly invulnerable abilities truly show how difficult it is for even Spider-Man to defeat him. And truth be told Spidey does not actually defeat Sandman. They share some silly PC moment at the end where Spider-Man allows the killer of his Uncle Ben go free because he did not mean to kill him. First, Spidey does not know that Sandman is not lying and has not tried to kill others before. If any lesser known actor than Sideways' Thomas Haden Church was playing Sandman then there would not be a constant effort to show Sandman only committed crimes to save his daughter. Spidey never cares about why any other criminals committed crimes and he still would want Sandman to go to jail for killing his Uncle Ben. If the Sandman harms someone else--like all the police men or private guards that he pounded into the ground, then Spider-Man letting him float away is a dumb move.

Topher Grace as Eddie Brock is pretty good as Peter's main competition at the Daily Bugle. Eddie's mere presence and persistence with trying to steal away Peter's only real job is another emotional barrier that Peter has to deal with in *Spidey-3*. Topher gives a good “Eddie Haskell” performance by sucking up to everyone. And there is a particular funny scene where he even sucks up to Spider-Man and breaks down how Peter Parker is a hack photographer. This type of brief surreal and quirky moment is what makes Spidey comics so popular in the first place. We do not see enough of Eddie being Venom. There should have been a short montage of Eddie with his new Venom powers reeking havoc all over the city. Venom should also have had a fight with Spidey where Spidey barely survived a savage beating. Then it would have made sense that he asked Hobgoblin to help him defeat both Venom and Sandman.



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4th, I love the fact that Venom made Spider-Man and Peter Park go to the dark side. There is a gradual and smooth shift in Peter's optimistic and cheery boyish exterior as we see him reliving flashbacks of not only his Uncle Parker's murder. But more importantly Peter remembers letting the criminal he thought killed his Uncle fall to his death. This scene established the overwhelming sense of guilt and denial that allows the alien "Venom" symbiote to fully take over Peter Parker. It is Peter whom chooses to become the more powerful and ethically less challenged Venom/Spidey to seek revenge against Flint Marko aka the Sandman. I personally enjoyed Parker being bad as he smashes Brock's digital camera against a wall and calls him a chump.

The Venom suit allowed Peter to freely experience emotions and urges he would never do himself under normal conditions. I actually had the most fun in Act II of *Spidey 3* watching a new and improved Peter Parker shake off his geeky, nerdy and timid persona in exchange for a bold, confident and fun guy. Of course this is all played for laughs, but it was refreshing to see Peter Parker act as bold as he does when he is in his Spider-Man suit. I know most major film critics will hate this part of *Spidey-3* because they want their superheroes simple. Batman is scary and smart. X-Men are weird and mysterious. Or Superman is honest and brave. Having Peter or Spidey go dark played right into the hands of film critics who needed something bad to say about a film they know will be a worldwide blockbuster no matter what they wrote. My only concern is that Venom/Spidey should have gone further by cheating on Mary Jane and spent the night with Betty Brant or Gwen--or at least kissed them.



5th, If *Spider-Man 3* is so great does that mean *Spider-Man 4* is going to “Jump The Shark”. The simple answer is “yes” and “no”. “Yes”, because Sony—and Sam Raimi in my belief are determined to make Spider-Man as big a hero as Superman. Instead of going with the Batman model of being a hero/menace that is feared by criminals and the underworld, hunted by the police and a myth to the general public. Sony intentionally wants viewers—mainly kid fans and family members—to be squarely in favor with Spider-Man—no matter what the costs to the overall fate of the franchise. The reason why Spider-Man was always a great comic book was because he would save the city over and over again and never get any credit for it. That is what kept him humble and always on the grind. He could not relax when fighting crime or saving someone from an accident because he could not rely on crooks being afraid of him, the cops wanting to help him or the public cheering whenever they saw him.

What Sony and Sam have done in the three *Spidey* films is to hedge their bet that post 911 movie audiences want a Spidey to cheer for and not one they fear. Unlike Marvel’s other mega superhero franchise, Fox’s X-Men, the mutant heroes are all hated, misunderstood and are not accepted as popular forces of good. The only exception to this theory is Fox’s Fantastic Four. But in truth the Fantastic Four are larger than life heroes and celebrities in New York is exactly how they are portrayed in their FF 4 comic books. In fact, it was in Marvel Comics highly integrated universe where a Spider-Man could never attain instant citywide acceptance or hero worship because there was a Fantastic Four or Avengers that were way more popular than him. Comic book Spider-Man had self doubts about his own importance amongst Marvel’s New York superheroes. The Fantastic Four did not have secret identities to protect. Since *Spidey 2*, Sony was moving their *Spidey* films to a point where Peter Parker can reveal to the public that he is in fact Spider-Man. I never bought the “corny” fact that Spidey lost his mask in the *Spider-Man 2* subway battle with Doctor Octopus--and that no one had a cell phone with a camera to take his picture. Or his secret could be trusted with honest New Yorkers who were so grateful for Spidey saving his life. And then in *Spidey 3* we see numerous shots of Peter Parker taking off his masks on rooftops in broad day light or fighting Venom and Sandman without his mask. There are cameras everywhere today and to think the news media would not have already got a telescopic shot or footage of Peter Parker without his mask is beyond stupid. Sony and Sam have paved the way for audiences to expect a future *Spider-Man 4* or *5* with Peter Parker openly being Spider-Man to the public.

And “No” the simple reason why future *Spider-Man* films won’t suck is because more \$300 million budgets will allow Spidey’s greatest villains, The Lizard, The Rhino, The Vulture, Electro, The Scorpion, etc., to be done right. Spidey’s sequel success is tied directly to new digital cinema breakthroughs. So it is inevitable any future *Spidey* films will be great because they will look great. Whether Tobey Maguire and Sam Raimi are there is not a guarantee. Hollywood needs more *Spidey* films for it cannot rely on any other major superhero franchise besides Batman to deliver billions in box office, DVD and ancillary profits. I give ***Spider-Man 3*** five cheesecakes out of five.

Sincerely,

David L. Watts a.k.a. Money Train

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