

The special effects in Doctor Strange are its strongest element – worth the ticket price alone.



[FILM]

Doctor Strange

DIRECTOR, SCOTT DERRICKSON // STARRING, BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH, CHIWTEL EJIOFOR, TILDA SWINTON
// STUDIO, MARVEL STUDIOS

It's a bit of a strange one – Doctor Strange turns the Marvel Cinematic Universe upside down. Quite literally. Blowing the dust off one of Marvel's iconic 60's superheroes, Doctor Strange brings magic and mysticism to the big screen with explosive action and Inception-style visuals.

But what's it all about? Marvel fans will already know the ins and outs, but for those of you who haven't read the decades worth of comic books, here's the gist of it:

Doctor Stephen Strange (Benedict Cumberbatch) is a talented neurosurgeon. Naturally, this means he's also a bit of a jerk. He refuses to take patients who will ruin his 'perfect record' and manages to alienate himself from all his colleagues, except for the lovely E.R. surgeon, Christine Palmer (Rachel McAdams). All this comes to a crashing halt when a life-changing car accident leaves him with such severe nerve damage to his hands that he's unable to write or shave, much less perform delicate surgical procedures. His life in tatters, Strange becomes obsessed with fixing his broken hands, and when modern medicine gives up on him, he's forced to turn to more alternative methods.

"Forget everything you think you know," advises Mordo (Chiwitel Ejiofor) as he welcomes Strange into the mysterious world of magic and mysticism. But the real teacher comes in the form of the Ancient One (Tilda Swinton) – a Hare Krishna lookalike who goes beyond the trappings of a stereotypical mystical guru, blending ancient teachings with a sharp wit and piercingly odd look to create an almost alien-like, spiritual being.

Exchanging his surgical scrubs for a bright red sorcerer's cloak and a kick-ass goatee, his transformation into Doctor Strange is complete. But what began as a personal journey to fix his damaged hands soon turns into a fight to save the

NEW YORK CITY TURNS INSIDE OUT AS STRANGE AND MORDO TRAVERSE THE CHAOS

entire world from Kaelcius (Mads Mikkelsen) – a former pupil of the Ancient One who was corrupted by an extra-dimensional evil.

Not quite what he had in mind, then. Unfortunately, the plot treads familiar territory. There's the arrogant hero whose life is irreversibly altered, and following a brief personal quest, he changes for the better. So far, so Iron Man. It's a fairly standard origin story, but the film's visual effects are where it really shines. It's no secret that Doctor Strange has been compared to Christopher Nolan's sci-fi masterpiece, Inception. The similarities are obvious, New York City turns inside out as Strange and Mordo traverse the chaos that's literally unfolding around them. Director Scott Derrickson has cranked the mind-bending visuals up to eleven, with some impressive action scenes which see Doctor Strange battling Kaelcius through twisting, folding cityscapes that would give M.C. Escher a headache. Make no mistake – Doctor Strange is visually spectacular. It's also far from perfect.

It's not the most original movie. Its tight action and blistering effects can only do so much, and it's often let down by the sheer simplicity of its story. Still, you can't help but appreciate it for what it is – a solid superhero flick with enough action and spectacle to keep your interest until the end. Just don't expect Doctor Strange to alter your reality too much. **GM**

