

# Men in Black: International

NEW YORK — With “Men in Black: International” (Columbia), director F. Gary Gray serves up an amusing and stylish reboot of the sci-fi comedy franchise that kicked off in 1997.

While sometimes dicey dialogue and a bizarre offscreen encounter indicate his film is best for mature audiences, its restraint in other respects makes it possibly acceptable for older adolescents.

The globetrotting plot revolves around a newcomer to the titular secret force dedicated to regulating human interactions with aliens, Molly, aka Agent M (Tessa Thompson). As flashbacks show, in childhood, Molly was exposed to the work of the agency and managed to avoid having her memory of the event erased with a so-called Neuralyzer according to the MIB’s usual MO.

Thus began a 20-year quest to join the team, meaning that, once she proves her potential to bigwig Agent O (Emma Thompson), M makes an avid rookie. Her first assignment, however — on which she’s teamed with experienced and respected Agent H (Chris Hemsworth) — fails disastrously.

Vungus, the royal visitor from a distant planet she and H have been dispatched to protect and entertain during a brief sojourn in London, is assassinated by two other extraterrestrials. As the duo shift their focus to hunting down the killers, suspicions grow that there’s a mole in the organization.

The head of the London office, High T (Liam Neeson), has his doubts about H’s rival, Agent C (Rafe Spall), while M begins to wonder about H himself.

As scripted by Art Marcum and Matt Holloway, this is a pleasant, lightweight diversion bristling with fun gadgetry and populated by offbeat creatures, including Pawny (voice of Kumail Nanjiani), a chess piece who aids H and M while providing droll commentary on their activities. The combat is kept thoroughly stylized and the mutual attraction between the leads never even reaches the hand-holding stage.

In keeping with the humorous celebration of H’s good looks that forms something of

a motif in the screenplay, however, an alien female blackmails him into going to bed with her. All the audience sees of this is his disgusted reaction and quick exit from her embrace the next morning.

Thereafter it's back to cars that turn into airplanes, motorcycles that double as rockets and a vast array of armaments for battling unruly extraterrestrial types. The upshot is mostly good-natured fun, though moviegoers won't need to be zapped with a Neuralyzer to forget all about it as soon as the lights come up again.

The film contains much bloodless violence, a couple of gruesome images, implied nonmarital sexual activity, a few mild oaths and occasional crude and crass language. The Catholic News Service classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 — parents strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

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