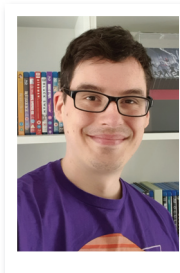




Mickey 17



***Mickey 17* is a sci-fi black comedy from Oscar-winning director Bong Joon Ho. It stars Robert Pattinson as Mickey Barnes, a down-on-his-luck man who volunteers to be an “expendable,” a person who can be cloned after they die, to escape his debts.**



Anyone who has seen a Bong Joon Ho film before knows that he is a master of his craft. His pictures are always meticulously crafted and beautifully shot, with sharp, socially conscious scripts and spot-on casting. *Mickey 17* is no exception.

Like the bulk of the director’s work, the main plot serves two purposes; to tell a compelling story, and to criticise capitalism. Sometimes, his social commentary is more subtle, such as the circumstances behind the creation of the monster in 2006’s *The Host*. Other times, like with the Best Picture-winning *Parasite*, Joon Ho’s political opinions are right out front. *Mickey 17* sits somewhere in the middle; the story isn’t exactly about the class divide, but you don’t have to look very hard to see Joon Ho’s scathing take-down of a crass, uncaring system.

The plot is rather clever; the story of a man who is re-printed every time he dies, often in deliberate ways for the advancement of scientific understanding. Alongside this is a race of gigantic, woodlouse-like aliens nicknamed “creepers,” a journey to a new planet, and a vain, cult-leader like politician, who appears to be a thinly-veiled analogue of Donald Trump despite what Joon Ho insists.

A film like this lives or dies on its central performance, and thankfully, Robert Pattinson delivers an excellent one; committed and classically slapstick, but with a real edge. Good support comes from Naomi Ackie as Mickey’s feisty

girlfriend, Steve Yeun as his sleazy, unreliable friend from Earth, and Toni Collette as the ruthless wife of the expedition’s leader, Kenneth Marshall. Mark Ruffalo, as Marshall himself, is entertaining, but his performance is over-the-top to the point of being pantomime.

The cinematography, by *Midnight in Paris* and *Uncut Gems* alum Darius Khondji, is stunning, and the visual effects are impressive. The score, by frequent Bong Joon Ho collaborator Jung Jae-il, is also very good.

Unfortunately, *Mickey 17* does have some flaws. Parts of the plot are severely under-developed, such that sometimes, it feels as though important scenes were left on the cutting room floor. In particular, the character of Kai Katz, played by Anamaria Vartolomei, is interesting, and feels like she has a large part to play, but her story just sort of fizzles out without a satisfying resolution. Likewise, the conclusion to the film’s main plot is somewhat unsatisfying, and features a rather frustrating fake-out final hurdle.

Mickey 17 does not reach the heights of some of Bong Joon Ho’s stellar filmography, like *Parasite* and *Snowpiercer*. Perhaps it never could. Yet, while it is flawed, it is still a very entertaining film, with an original and interesting concept, and some universally relevant social commentary.