



Film Review PROJECT HAIL MARY

By Duncan Forbes



Project Hail Mary is based on the best-selling book by Andy Weir. It stars Ryan Gosling as high school teacher Ryland Grace, who unexpectedly finds himself as humanity's best hope in combating a species of alien organisms that begin to drain the sun's energy.

After the success of the first adaptation of Andy Weir's work (2015's excellent *The Martian*) and the widespread love for the novel *Project Hail Mary*, this film (helmed by *The Lego Movie* directors Phil Lord and Chris Miller) had a lot to live up to. Like its unlikely hero, though, *Project Hail Mary* exceeds expectations, not only offering up a solid adaptation of Weir's story, but also one of the best films of the 2020s so far.

Project Hail Mary was quite a dense novel, with a lot of characters, and a significant amount of complicated science. Rather understandably, the movie cuts back on both of these elements, and while it can, at times, feel a little rushed, it is still an incredibly faithful adaptation, with all of the main beats of the story, as well as its message and spirit, playing out wonderfully on the big screen.



Ryan Gosling is a fantastic choice for Grace, with his effortless charm and deadpan humour fitting the hapless teacher-come-astronaut perfectly. While the story is pretty much a one-man show, the other actors more than hold their own, with Sandra Hüller's Eva Stratt being the character with the second most screen time. Hüller is just as great as Gosling, and humanises the director of *Project Hail Mary* beyond what is presented in the novel. All of the technical aspects of the film are tremendous. The special effects (which are, by

all accounts, largely practical) are stunning, giving us some of the most arresting space imagery since *Interstellar*. The score, by *Spider-Verse* composer Daniel Pemberton, is epic and emotive, and the cinematography by Greig Fraser is breathtaking. Drew Goddard's script takes the best of the novel and excises the worst (in particular some of the more cringey dialogue), leaving us with a story that is engaging from start to finish, and feels much less than its two-and-a-half hour runtime. The directing by Lord and Miller is also excellent, easily the best of their career.

All in all, *Project Hail Mary* is a beautiful, entertaining, stunning movie that will undoubtedly stand with the best in its genre, and will likely go down as one of the greatest cinematic achievements of the decade.