'Amazing Spider-Man' is familiar, yet pleasantly new

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Perhaps it's too early for a reboot of the Spider-Man franchise, which Sony began in 2002 with "Spider-Man," but the restart with "The Amazing Spider-Man" features a side of Peter Parker that's welcome and more interesting, making his web-slinging hero side, that much more powerful.

Sony went back to square-one with 'Amazing,' starting with Peter Parker, played by **Andrew Garfield**, watching his scientist father and his mother leave unexpectedly. Peter grows up with his Aunt May (**Sally Field**) and Uncle Ben (**Martin Sheen**).

Peter meets a scientist, Dr. Curt Connors (**Rhys Ifans**), who worked with Peter's father Richard on cross-genetic research. He also develops a friendship and love interest in Gwen Stacy, played by **Emma Stone**.

But when Connors uses a revolutionary serum that he and Peter co-create to repair his amputated right arm, using reptile DNA, the good doctor turns into a misguided monster, "The

Lizard."

The film separates itself well from the previous trilogy, showing a more troubled Peter Parker than before. While **Tobey Maguire's** Parker was smitten by his love interest, he isn't necessarily displayed as a teen struggling with the obvious issues that would come along from losing his parents so early.

Parker's fears and sadness about his parents is obvious in many scenes, especially when he discovers a mysterious briefcase left behind by his father. The weight of his parent's disappearance is heavy on his shoulders at all times. As a result, his character is more real and vulnerable than many superhero films have given us in the past.

His motivation to become the hero Spider-Man is slow and his drive to catch a killer is very personal and believable.

Parker's relationships create a strong bond between all the characters depicted, as they are all entwined. Stacy is Dr. Connors' top intern at Oscorp and her father, Captain Stacy (**Denis Leary**) of the New York Police Dept., adds another layer of intrigue to her relationship with Parker.

Having Peter directly contribute to the creation of his major villain in the film is a beautiful stroke that gives the kid who just adjusts from coping with spider powers to deciding to use them for the greater good.

Garfield and Stone thrive in moments together, showing Parker's goofy side and his lack of social skills. He displays his selflessness early on and potential for heroics, as well as his incredible intellect that Stacy falls in love with. Stone brings great comedic relief and a strong female role that achieves more on screen than Mary Jane Watson (**Kirsten Dunst**) in the past films.

By developing a strong Peter Parker, when he puts on the mask and swings around New York City as Spider-Man, the audience is more able to connect with his exploits as the hero. There is

a lot at stake, especially considering Parker helped create the villain.

Ifans puts on a great show as the film's villain. He's a genius, who is stymied by scientific roadblocks and pressured from behind the scenes by Oscorp owner Norman Osborne, who never makes a real appearance.

He strives to help mankind with his research, but when pushed to the limits by his corporate antagonist, he tests an unready serum on himself, creating "the Lizard." Despite an at-time goofy grin, the Lizard is impressive on screen and is an absolute mental and physical match for Spider-Man that was also a good departure from the previous films.

In a great scene, after the Lizard throws Spider-Man through the wall of a chemistry lab, the villain quickly mixes a concoction of chemicals, throwing the volatile mixture at Spider-Man, which explodes on contact.

It not only generated a good laugh but also showed that villains who are physically imposing and incredibly intelligent at the same time are the most impressive. After seeing his arm cured, albeit at a cost, Connors' motives become misguided as he seeks to unleash the serum on the city, which he sees has helping the population.

From a comic-reader standpoint, I enjoyed this Spider-Man film so much more than previous ones because of a critical part of his character that makes a strong showing: Spider-Man's wit.

While thwarting a car thief, Spider-Man makes fun of him, plays around and has a little fun being a hero. When the cops show up, he's equally brash. Spider-Man is known for being a loudmouth, bantering with his enemies as he fights them.

Often he can be kind of a jerk, but it separates his light-hearted attitude and ultimately his youth.

Director **Marc Webb**, who has a deft hand with romantic comedies, does well to weave a strong

story, showcase excellent hand-to-hand fights between the hero and villain as well as put together some outstanding web-slinging sequences.

Screenwriters **James Vanderbilt**, **Alvin Sargent**, and **Steve Kloves** deliver strong dialogue, characters and have the recipe for a strong trilogy, should they stick to the formula that made this movie so good.

Despite Garfield and Stone's excellent chemistry on-screen, at times they were rather too awkward, with too much stammering in dialogue and a lot of strange head movements when together.

Also, many audiences may question the need for an origin story, yet again, and a lot of moviegoers may be put off by the fact that they have to sit through yet another story of how Parker became Spider-Man.

But this incarnation is fresh enough and manages to inject enough new life into the character to make the back track somewhat new. Spider-Man is sure to put up strong numbers, until yet another comic book movie comes in to challenge the friendly-neighborhood hero.

'The Amazing Spider-Man' is rated PG-13 with a runtime of 136 minutes. For local show times, visit http://www.roxy10.com/ .

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