'MiB3' takes a deeper look at its' heroes, is fun in the process

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It's been quite a while since the first "Men in Black" film deputed in 1997, and 10 years since the sequel, but "Men In Black III" was a pleasant surprise that did more to scratch away at the titular characters than the last installment.

"Men in Black" follows returning stars Agent Kay (**Tommy Lee Jones**) and Agent Jay (**Will Smith**) who, like before, are busy protecting the earth from any alien bad guys.

But when an alien criminal, Boris "The Animal" (**Jemaine Clement**) escapes from prison and seeks revenge on Agent Kay, Smith's Jay must travel back in time to stop Boris' schemes, including meeting up with Kay's 1969-self, played by **Josh Brolin**.

The film's highest achievement was the ability to convey more about the heroes, their pasts and pry away at Kay's emotional defenses. While you may need to brush up on the character after 10 years of separation, Kay isn't exactly an open-book even for his partner.

Jones and Smith play the typical buddy-cop tandem, with Smith supplying the loud-boisterous

jokes and comedic relief while Jones has two expressions: seriousness and an intriguing look of a man who carries more weight than the films ever reveal to the audience.

Thankfully, the plot centers on Jay having to meet his partner's 29-year-old self, who is much the same but also very different. Brolin plays a Kay that is more jovial and has a very youthful exuberance about him. Jones has always been the Kay that is never joking, rarely divulges his personal feelings and is very enigmatic.

Smith plays his usual self, with corny jokes, outlandish mannerisms and often very dated attempts at humor. While he has shown himself somewhat capable in a variety of roles, when he slips back into the "Fresh Prince of Bel-Air" character, it's hard to see him as anything else.

I guess it's more of my comedic taste, but I found much of Smith's jokes not very funny, or just the usual fluff that I was waiting to pass so we can get on to the more interesting bits. Since the first "Men in Black," Agent Kay has always been the most interesting character.

Things are no different in this third installment.

I can't help but think that while Smith is undoubtedly the movie's star and a mega-star at that, I'm not sure many would say he's a better actor than Jones, and I felt he was the weakest link of the film for most of it's run time.

However, when the climax emerges and we actually get to see some depth to the Agent Jay character, it's such a relief and a breath of fresh air. If the previous two films had done as well a job of bringing depth to Jay as did the final 20-25 minutes of "Men in Black III" I would have enjoyed the character more.

The film's tough production history can't go without a mention as it spent a lot of time in pre-production limbo, many script rewrites, including some from Smith himself. At times, I could easily tell which parts he may have written, lines or silly moments for himself to display some of his comedic "gold."

But that's not to say Smith and Jay don't get their chance to grow. The film's closing shows just that, with an honest moment between the partners.

Brolin is a welcome addition, as is supporting character "Griffin," an alien described as a "fifth dimensional being" who can view space, and all modes of time simultaneously. The thought and idea of such a character was great and Griffin, played by **Michael Stuhlbarg** is a great cog in the machine.

I loved the overall idea of the plot, being time traveling back to save the world but maybe because we really get to see more of Agent Kay's emotional drive and it left me wanting more characterization from, dare I say it, any future sequels.

The first film in 1997 was such a success because of Smiths' star power, for one, and this film probably will no doubt succeed in the same way. But while the first was a surprising and interesting view of alien films, giving it a sarcasm and little winks to the audience, that is now all too familiar in a third outing.

The film was directed by **Barry Sonnenfeld**, director of the other two installments as well.

I'm sure there are varying viewpoints on the characters, many will enjoy Smith's usual antics and character, while others may enjoy Jones' and Brolin's Agent Kay. For a fan of Agent Kay, I was happy to see some layers peeled away during the film. If they continue, I can only hope they repeat that recipe in place of silly jokes.

"Men in Black III" is rated PG-13 and is now playing in theaters with a runtime of 1 hour 44 minutes.

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