

'Death Race': good action but little else

Movie: 'Death Race'; Cast: Jason Statham, Tyrese Gibson, Ian McShane, Joan Allen; Director: Paul W.S. Anderson; Rating: *

Some movies manage to be incredibly inferior in some areas and yet manage to deliver wonderfully in others. The action movie 'Death Race' is a prime example where the plot and script are laughable but where the action sequences are thrilling. At times it looks too much like a movie which can be enjoyed only by a very niche audience.

Jensen Ames is an ex-con framed for murder and sent to a prison where the prisoners are forced to compete in a high-speed car race with barely any rules.

The movie is set in 2012 and it does get a few things right. The economy has collapsed in 2012 and sinister corporations have taken over. The background of the economic collapse eerily echoes the present financial crisis. But pretty much everything else in the movie is other worldly.

The races are at times spectacularly thrilling, but also verge on becoming monotonous. The action scenes are staged well and it would have to be so since the action is this movie's saving grace.

The script is laughable. Statham is not a good actor by any standard and his dialogue is mercifully monosyllabic. The dialogue serves just to intimate us on the proceedings and no attempt is made to flesh out a character.

There are two very fine actors in the form of Joan Allen and Ian McShane. Allen is an Oscar nominated actress and seems to have a habit of appearing in action movies after having shone in the Bourne series. She has very little to do here and tries to bring a touch of class and sophistication to this at times drab movie.

Ian McShane impressed in the HBO series 'Deadwood' but has not managed to snag the role he deserves. Statham does the requisite grunting, wincing, scowling and gives the intense gaze of a typical action character.

Since this is an action movie, we can literally tick away the necessary ingredients. There is the cliché eye-candy in the form of Natalie Martinez. There is a hint of background characterisation for her that seems sadly added on for the mere pleasure of being looked at.

At times the movie is unnecessarily violent and even that seems strategically placed to satiate the testosterone laden male teen. The gore is mostly momentary and thankfully the action emphasis is on explosions during the car race.

For those looking for a not too demanding viewing with just enough action to be thrilled for a hour and a half, 'Death Race' is a good bet.

Sevanand Gaddala (© IANS / India eNews)