When we last heard from the X-Men, it was in the complete mess of a movie called "X-Men: The Last Stand". Therefore the decision was made to move toward individual stories, and who better to use than the most popular X-Man of them all, Wolverine? We sent Mitch to the cinema to check out this past weekend's top box office release. What did The Mitch Man think of the latest X-Men film? Find out in his latest movie review for us ...

When we last heard from the X-Men, it was in the complete mess of a movie called "X-Men: The Last Stand". Like any film franchise that had run out of ideas, the movie was nothing more than flashy visuals and loud noises, and despite making decent money at the box office, it was obvious that the franchise was in need of a break, and then a new direction.

Therefore the decision was made to move toward individual stories, and who better to use than the most popular X-Man of them all, Wolverine? Even with the critical bashing that was unleashed upon the third X-Men film, Hugh Jackman and his adamantium laced character was seen as the best part of the film, so making a movie about upon how Wolverine got his claws seems a wise choice.

But did it deliver?

Sort of.

"Wolverine" is an entertaining tale with all of the stunts, visuals, and action that you would expect, and Jackman once again shines in the title role. But while it may be entertaining, it really isn't that much fun, too often buried in its own angst, weighed down too much by a plodding, muddled, and ultimately uninteresting plot.

For fans of the first three films, it does give a very satisfactory back story to Logan, the man behind the snarl and the metal knives that protrude out of his hands. From the first movies, we know that Logan's memories have been lost, so the tale of his youth was something entirely new. It picks up in 1845 where the boy who would become Wolverine first discovers the truth of his powers, and he is initially protected by his older brother Victor, who has similar powers of self-healing (as well, obviously, as not aging). The powers serve the brothers well, as they are shown together fighting in the Civil War, World War I, World War II, and Vietnam in a very well done montage.

But Victor (Liev Schreiber) is much wilder than Logan, and his animalistic behavior lands them in trouble in Vietnam. In fact, no one is quite sure what to do with them after they are lined up in front of a firing squad and executed, only to get right back up. Thus they are introduced to the smarmy Col. Stryker (Danny Huston), and teamed up with other mutants, although it's not really explained why.

Logan's not comfortable with the direction the Black Ops group is going, and walks away, only to have his past catch back up to him six years later in the Canadian Rockies, where he works as a lumberjack, living with his beautiful girlfriend Kayla, a school teacher.

The biggest problem with this movie is that the plot devices are incredibly clunky, almost seen as minor inconveniences that must be endured to get from one action sequence to another. The next biggest problem is that other than Logan and

Victor, the other characters are completely bland and forgettable. You get, at best, 20 second introductions into the other characters and their powers, but no insight into them at all. Dominic Monaghan as Bolt, Kevin Durand as The Blob, W ill.i.Am
as John Wraith, Daniel Henney as Agent Zero, and Ryan Reynolds as Wade Wilson are nothing more than filler; characters you know nothing about and care nothing for. Given some of the names of the guest stars, especially Reynolds, I was deeply disappointed in how they were used.

Taylor Kitsch fares a little better as Remy LeBeua/Gambit, but he was still underutilized, and one particular scene where he's involved in breaking up a fight between Logan and Victor made no sense whatsoever.

What saves this movie from being as bad as "X-Men: The Last Stand", is the excellent acting and fantastic chemistry seen from Jackman and Schreiber. The last time Schreiber and Jackmen where on screen together, Liev was playing the nerdy intellectual in the chintzy "Kate and Leopold". Now he is relishing his second straight role as an angry, powerful, fighting brother of the main character, following his outstanding work in "Defiance" with Daniel Craig. Schreiber seems to be having a blast the entire film, and his character is the best "is he or isn't he a villain" since Ian McKellen as Magneto.

But Jackman has the task to carry this movie, and he is more than up to the task. Buffed up from months of rigorous physical training, the 40 year old looks incredible, and carries all of the action sequences with ease. More importantly, he shows you the humanity behind the rage, and you can see clearly his continual inner battles to avoid falling into the same emotional trap that has ensnared his brother. He also manages to throw some well needed humor into the film in the appropriate places, much as he did in the very first X-Men movie.

Overall, the film is superior to not only the third X-Men film, but also last year's "The Incredible Hulk", a movie where we also saw a superior leading

actor (Edward Norton) lifting a mediocre comic book film to a higher level than it deserved. That is all well and good that "Wolverine" is better than those, but after "Iron Man", "The Dark Knight", and "Watchmen", we expect more as an audience from our super-hero movies. It takes more than flashy special effects and noisy action sequences to impress us now; it takes believable scripts, memorable characters, and some true emotional content.

If they could have built more off from the gold-mine they had in Jackman and Schreiber, this could have been an exceptional movie. But they didn't, so it receives...

My Rating: Bill Nelsen (2 ½ footballs).

Review Key:

Otto Graham: Over 4 Footballs. HOF quality movie

Bernie Kosar: 4 Footballs. Excellent

Brian Sipe: 3 ½ Footballs. Very Good

Frank Ryan: 3 Footballs. Good

Bill Nelsen: 2 ½ Footballs. OK. Worth seeing.

Kelly Holcomb: 2 Footballs. Disappointingly inconsistent but some bright spots.

Tim Couch: 1 ½ Footballs. Poor. Had potential, but lack of support led to an overall stinker.

Derek Anderson: 1 Football. Horrible. Teased into watching due to potential, we are angry at the reality of mediocrity.

Mike Phipps: ½ Football. "We gave away Paul Warfield for THIS?" level of suck

Spergon Wynn: No Footballs. UberSuckitude personified.