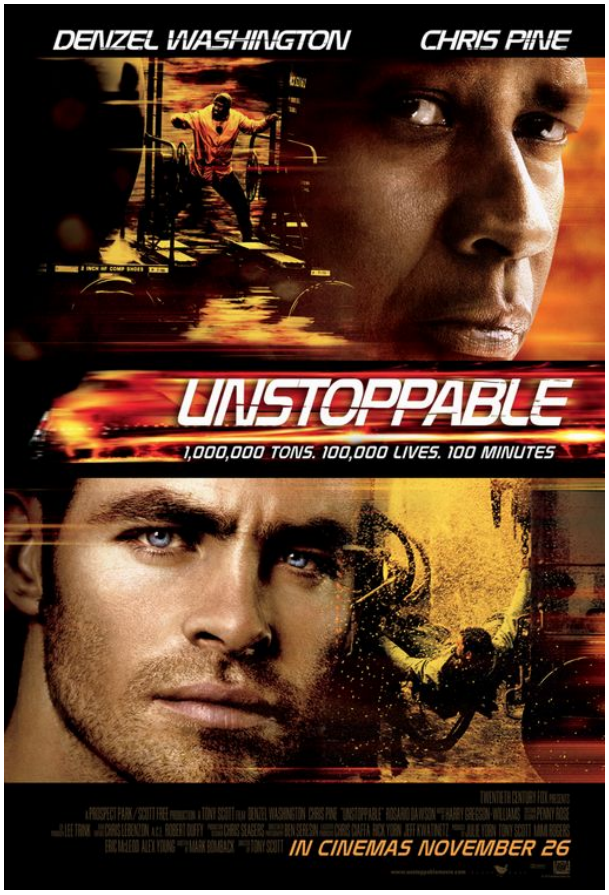

I'm still not exactly sure what to think about "Unstoppable", the latest collaboration between director Tony Scott, Denzel Washington, and a train.

In one regard, it is one of the most solid pieces of entertainment you are likely to see this year. A short (90 minute) film that will have you gripping your chair due to its heart pounding action and tension. If you want something to get your adrenaline flowing; this is the film to watch.

On the other hand, if you want a movie that has any depth? You'll have to go see something else…but that won't stop you from enjoying this film. For me, the lack of depth didn't detract from my enjoyment of the film while I was watching it. Later on, it occurred to me that I had just had the visual equivalence of cotton candy, but I didn't really mind.

Credit goes to Scott, Washington, and Chris Pine in his first major role since his breakthrough as Captain Kirk in JJ Abrams' reboot of the Star Trek franchise. Scott for keeping things minimal. Show the actors…let them get in a little background information on themselves…cue the runaway train. But if the actors can't sell themselves as sympathetic, then you are just there to watch the carnage…and you can do that for free every week watching NASCAR. This is where Washington and Pine shine through. There is very little time for getting too in depth with their characters, so they have to sell themselves quickly and believably.

Washington once again plays the older man facing his own mortality as Frank, a 28 year veteran train engineer staring down an upcoming forced retirement and life alone after the passing of his wife and his 18 and 19 year old daughters moving out of the house. This time, Denzel doesn't pack on the pounds for sympathy/character like he did with the uneven Scott directed "Taking of Pelham 123"; he just plays it straight, and it is a very effective, minimal performance that can stand up to any of his other roles.

Chris Pine also surprises with the grittiness of his character Will. With his scraggly beard and worn out clothes, Pine is not the pretty boy, and he certainly doesn't have the cockiness you would expect from him after playing the iconic James T. Kirk. Instead, Will is just out of training, on his first full day as a conductor, and trying to juggle his emotions as he deals with relationship issues with his wife…leading to lapses in concentration that Frank will not tolerate. These two men have to quickly learn to trust each other; and in doing so, also find admiration and respect.

But these are just place settings for the action, which gets rolling less than 10 minutes into the film as a couple of stereotypical idiot workers screw up by not properly moving a half mile long freight train 1,000 feet in the train yard, and then complicate it by not correctly setting up the air brakes. What starts out as a laughing matter quickly turns deadly as the runaway train's throttle automatically shifts into "full" (no, I have no idea how…and I doubt it could really happen that way, but why ruin a good action flick with facts?).

Oh, yes…and it also turns out that the runaway train has eight tankers filled with hazardous materials that could kill thousands. And there is also a train on the same tracks coming in the

opposite direction that is filled with 8 – 10 year old schoolchildren.

There stereotypes keep coming as the erstwhile head of the train yard (Rosario Dawson) tries to quarterback the resolution of the problem. Naturally, every correct instinct that she has is overridden by her weaselly boss at corporate headquarters (Kevin Dunn) more concerned about profit than anything else. So after a couple of ill conceived attempts to stop the train fails, it is on route to fly into the city of Stratton, PA and derail on a 15 mph elevated track turn that will dump the hazardous contents right onto a series of giant fuel tanks.

Unless our heroes can stop them. They are close-by; on the same track, and have the ability to try to chase it down from behind. In reverse.

And that's the sum of the movie right there. Very simple, and your mind will not strain a single cell (unless you decide to concentrate on the holes in logic. My advice; don't bother).

It's fun. It's exciting. And it works.

It may be totally forgettable in the long run, but it is still a film I feel 90% of the people would not regret watching.

My Rating – Frank Ryan (3 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 renting.

Kelly Holcomb: 2 Footballs. Meh. 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. Piss-poor. Frustrating to the level of throwing objects at the screen

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

Spergon Wynn: No Footballs. UberSuckitude personified.