“The Amazing Spider-Man 2”

By Helen Lutz

Did you ever have the right idea – just at the wrong time? I have always been fascinated by computers. My very first class in college was a FORTRAN programming class in the engineering department of the University of Missouri at Kansas City. Coming from a Catholic high school, which was predominantly girls, it was a shock to find that I was the only female in the class (I made my move from glasses to contacts in a hurry)! The computers of the day filled entire rooms. Programs were submitted by punching the commands on IBM cards (which also made really cute angels at Christmas time). In 1971 I knew that computers were the wave of the future, however, not much training was available at the time, especially for girls.

“The Amazing Spider-Man 2” swings into theatres everywhere as the web-slinging Spider-Man (Andrew Garfield) swings from New York skyscraper to skyscraper with ease. The computer graphic designers create the appearance of invincibility as he dives from heights which might upset the stomachs of a few folks with vertigo or who have an aversion to heights. While some folks question the value of Spider-Man, who usually ends up leaving a mess of broken buildings and crashed cars in his crime-fighting wake, he does have the uncanny ability to fight off the bad guys who are stealing dangerous nuclear devices while taking time to help out the little guy trying to cross the street.

High School is finished for Peter Parker and his girlfriend Gwen Stacy (Emma Stone); the time has arrived for more serious thought. Peter is plagued with questions about his parents. Gwen is considering attending Oxford in the fall semester. And Peter’s old friend Harry Osborn (Dane DeHaan) has suddenly reappeared taking the helm of Oscorp but looking for Spider-Man. Peter is a man in search of answers and finding them in somewhat awkward places.

“The Amazing Spider-Man 2” tries to offer something for everyone. It’s a love story between Peter and Gwen (complete with music), it’s a comic book with an indestructible hero saving mankind from hideous villains, it’s a quest to learn the truth about family, it’s a ton of expensive special effects all of which are presented in such a way that they become a bit tiring. The film takes us through several story lines beginning with Peter’s family leaving him, to the boyfriend/girlfriend relationship, to helping the Oscorp nerd, Max Dillon (Jamie Foxx), who turns into Electro (watch out for electric eels), to Harry who’s sick and becomes the Green Goblin, to Aleksei Sytsevich (Paul Giamatti), to ... to ... to...

Director Marc Webb (I’m sure there’s no pun intended) and writers Kurtzman and Orci work diligently to stuff ten pounds of Spider-Man into a five pound bag. Three individual villains in any comic book movie is a little overkill. Spider-Man hardly has time to catch his breath, unless he’s with Gwen and even then he’s saving her from more bad guys. The one-liners weave a web of clichés instead of being clever. The writers lost me in the first few minutes of the movie when Spider-Man appears goofy while dealing with a nuclear threat ... guess it’s all in a day’s work. On a scale of one to four Hart Beats ... I give “The Amazing Spider-Man 2” ★★★☆☆ for being a comic book, but failing to bring the comic book to life. P.S. You don’t have to wait until after the credits end unless you enjoy a lot of reading with no payoff.