

FilmReview

Alex Rider: Operation Stormbreaker

It's better than some James Bond movies — no matter what your age.

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Contributing Columnist

One day, while teenage Alex Rider (Alex Pettyfer) laments to his nanny/housekeeper Jack (Alicia Silverstone) about the travails of his ennui-burdened life in the home of his banker/uncle Ian (Ewan McGregor), something happens that will change him forever (or at least as long as screenwriter Anthony Horowitz keeps pumping out novels in his teen superspy series). Turns out uncle Ian is really a 007-esque superspy for Britain's MI6, complete with gimmick-invested vehicles, and as the younger Rider suf-

fers under the dark cloud of being a teen, the elder Rider is racing for his life in a chase involving motorcycles, cars and a helicopter that would put Bond to shame — except for the part where McGregor doesn't get back to headquarters and vanishes from the movie.

Looks like MI6 is going to need a new superspy to bring down nefarious Darrius Sayle (Mickey Rourke), an Internet tycoon who plans to release an actual microbe-type virus on the children of Britain via the computer hardware he has donated to every school in the land. His urge to kill arises because the now-

prime minister (a way-under-utilized Robbie Coltrane) picked on him when they were schoolmates. There's a lesson for any bullies out there: You could be dooming a generation — behave yourselves.

Fortunately, MI6 has a new superspy ready to go in young

Alex. Remarkably, all of Alex's adventure vacations with uncle Ian — mountain climbing, skydiving, martial arts, globe-trotting, etc. — really were preparing the youngster for the family business. MI6 lures him to their expansive special operations facility, causing the teenager to remark, "So what is this place, Hogwarts?"

At first Alex doesn't want to pick up the trade, but the head of MI6 special operations, Alan Blunt (a pasty Bill Nighy, whose later attempt at a smile is hilarious), brings some pressure: Jack is an illegal alien (darned Americans crossing the border, not learning the queen's English) and will be deported if Alex doesn't play along. So off he goes for some field training by British special forces before embarking on the mission to infiltrate Sayle's headquarters, figure out his scheme and stop him.

Apart from the chase and gadgets, many other Bondish elements are included, including the ever-popular "plot his demise, then leave him (mostly) alone" trick, and the suggestively named girlfriend, Sabina Pleasure (Sarah Bolger). And as in the better Bond movies, despite knowing such plot devices are lurking, skillful gimmick rationing keeps them from undermining the characters or the pacing (fast) of the story.



Alex Pettyfer and Sarah Bolger

"Alex Rider: Operation Stormbreaker"

99 min.

Rated PG (sequences of action violence and some peril)

Directed by Geoffrey Sax

Screenplay by Anthony Horowitz (based on his novel)

Rating:



(out of 4 turtles)

Visit fandango.com for theaters, movie times and to purchase advance tickets.

There's plenty of action and excitement — including a brief charge by the Household Cavalry in full, brightly burnished Buckingham Palace regalia — plus some weird henchmen for Sayle. It's better than some James Bond movies — no matter what your age.

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