Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol (2011)

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With Tom Cruise producing and starring in this the fourth instalment of the popular Mission Impossible series you know the stakes are high. As has been widely documented Cruise is in need of a box office hit after a few misfires in recent years.

He is on a well trodden path here, although a slip up in this franchise could prove fatal.

Directed by Brad Bird (better known for animated films like Ratatouille and The Incredibles) Cruise is once again IMF agent Ethan Hunt who, together with his team which includes Benji Dunn(Simon Pegg on fine comic form again), William Brandt (Jeremy Renner who has a busy 2012 as he is appearing in The Avengers and the latest Bourne outing) and Jane Carter (the easy on the eye Paula Patton) are up against it.

These four remaining IMF agents have been disavowed by their government and are out on their own. Not only must they clear their names after being framed for an explosion at the Kremlin in Moscow they must track down a super intelligent, resourceful and of course elusive terrorist in the form of Kurt Hendricks (played with cold relish by Michael Nyqvist) and prevent him from launching a nuclear strike on the United States and thus avert a potential third world war.

I am happy to report that all the staple ingredients for a successful Mission Impossible film are in place: a great team of highly individual and colourful characters with their own individual skills (and flaws), the viewer knows that missions can go wrong as the opening sequence (and previous films) show. Uncertainty and mistrust are also ever present (hey this is espionage folks!) as are the disguises and gadgets.

What really impressed me apart from the strong writing and performances were the many thrilling set pieces. Yes there is plenty of hardware on display and chases on foot and in cars, but it is the gasp-inducing stunts that really steal the show. Particularly heart stopping are the scenes involving the team in Dubai, if you are afraid of heights you may experience some uncomfortable and unforgettable viewing!

The film flies by as it moves from Moscow to Dubai and onto Mumbai. It does not feel like over two hours such is the frenetic pace.

There is humour but not to the detriment of the storyline or for the sake of it and for the main part this is a desperate and breakneck action movie that despite being the fourth in the franchise looks quite sprightly and far from tired and formulaic.

This is exactly the vehicle Cruise needed to revive his somewhat flagging career and I am sure this will perform well at the box office. Do not rule out further entries as long as they can match the intensity of this one.