

BY MARK MESZOROS
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We last saw the version of Peter Parker portrayed by Tom Holland in 2021’s “Spider-Man: No Way Home,” the epic close to the fantastic trilogy of movies that began with 2017’s “Spider-Man: Homecoming.”

It’s appropriate, then, that when we catch back up with him in the similarly outstanding “Spider-Man: Brand New Day” – the latest collaboration between Sony Pictures and Disney-owned Marvel Studios that allows for Spider-Man to exist within the latter’s Marvel Cinematic Universe – Peter is a man without a home.

Oh, sure, he is living in a New York City apartment building, in a storage space converted into a residential unit suitable for a young man existing largely on protein powder and pizzas brought to his door. However, as a result of the events of “No Way Home,” the two people most important to him, girlfriend MJ (Zendaya) and best friend Ned (Jacob Batalon), do not remember him, and he is emotionally adrift.

In theaters this week, “Brand New Day” begins shortly after “No Way Home,” with MJ and Ned attending the Massachusetts Institute of Technology together, Peter wistfully following Ned’s video posts featuring MJ and himself for their four years at MIT that follow.

He has otherwise focused his attention and energy on being the friendly neighborhood Spider-Man, a hero who has become adored by the city for his constant crime fighting, Spidey taking down villains such as his old “Homecoming” foe Scorpion (Michael Mando of “Better Call Saul”).

He even has a police



Spider-Man and Boomerang in a scene from “Spider-Man: Brand New Day.”

MOVIE REVIEW

An amazing fresh start for a superhero

ally in Detective Jean DeWolff (Liza Colón-Zayas, “The Bear”), whom he chats with by phone and may be the closest thing he has to an actual friend these days. She greatly worries about him – she knows he’s suffering from headaches – and warns him that his life can’t be all about work. He responds, with his aw-shucks charm, with the cliché about never working a day in your life if you love what you do.

He also has a not-so-chummy ally in Jon Bernthal’s Frank Castle, aka the violent, not-bashful-about-killing vigilante the Punisher. As the pair try to stop a huge armored truck from wreaking havoc on city streets, the Wallcrawler frustrates Frank by foiling his particular brand of intervention.

Soon, Spider-Man realizes he has a new, incredibly

powerful enemy in the form of a young woman portrayed by Sadie Sink. (The name of the character inhabited by the “Stranger Things” star has not been revealed in advance of the film, so we’ll play along.)

The villain can control the minds of anyone nearby – well, frustratingly to her, not Spidey’s – and can jump from person to person to cover a great distance. When she learns her enemy’s true identity, this puts MJ – now sharing a Big Apple apartment with the Spider-Man-obsessed Ned, a scenario Peter once envisioned being a part of – right in her crosshairs.

Peter can no longer stay out of MJ’s life in the name of protecting her.

Based very loosely – mainly conceptually – on the 2008 “Brand New Day” storyline from the pages of Marvel Comics, the film is very well-writ-

ten by Chris McKenna and Erik Sommers, who’ve co-penned the series’ previous three installments without other credited collaborators starting with 2019’s “Spider-Man: Far From Home.” It’s not surprising, then, that “Brand New Day” is chock-full of both thrills and heartfelt moments.

Plus, the tandem of scribes continues to juggle myriad characters well: The movie also sees the return of Mark Ruffalo as brilliant scientist and professor Bruce Banner, so you expect the Hulk can’t be far behind; the addition of Bill Metzger (Tramell Tillman, “Severance”), the head of the seemingly well-intentioned Department of Damage Control; and a fun cameo or two.

Having done topnotch work behind the camera with the original trilogy,

Jon Watts has handed the directorial reins to Destin Daniel Cretton, who matches his predecessor’s work. The filmmaker tops himself after 2021’s largely entertaining MCU affair “Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings” with a perfectly paced Spider-Man adventure.

Working with director of photography Brett Pawlak, his cinematographer on films including “The Glass Castle” (2017) and “Just Mercy” (2019), he achieves several arresting shots, including images of Spidey hanging out above the city in the film’s opening moments. And the visuals during the film’s wildly creative action sequences feel as though they could have been pulled from the popular “Spider-Man” video games for Sony Interactive Entertainment’s PlayStation consoles.

Fresh off of director Christopher Nolan’s megahit “The Odyssey,” in which he also shared scenes with Bernthal, Holland is expectedly wonderful as both Peter and Spidey. If you don’t love, root for and feel for his version of the enduring masked hero, there may be an insect-shaped hole in your heart. In “Brand New Day,” Spider-Man goes through, if not a complete metamorphosis, an evolution akin to a spider entering adulthood, which works thematically well in this story.

Ultimately, though, “Brand New Day” is about our hero learning that he cannot do this alone, an unfortunate byproduct of this being that Holland shares only so many scenes with his real-life wife, Zendaya (another “Odyssey” player), and even fewer with Batalon (“Reginald the Vampire”). There’s a lovely chemistry among the three, and the film leaves you wanting more of it.

However, there’s good news on that front. Whereas when “No Way Home” concluded, you wondered if Spider-Man wasn’t being positioned for a post-MCU, Sony-only existence, the studios’ deal was reupped, and Marvel mastermind Kevin Feige and Sony producer Amy Pascal have, according to the former, had conversations about how to make several more installments together.

Spider-Man has found the ideal home, and the hope here is that he stays there for a long time to come.

‘SPIDER-MAN: BRAND NEW DAY’
★★★★1/2 (out of 4)
MPA rating: PG-13 (for sequences of action/violence and some language)
Running time: 145 minutes
How to watch: In theaters. Check local listings for availability.

TV REVIEW

In ‘Furious,’ a female serial killer is more than the murders she commits

BY ROBERT LLOYD
Los Angeles Times/The Tribune Content Agency

“Furious,” which is now on Hulu, is technically a serial killer story, since there are multiple murders committed by a single character, but happily that is the least of it.

Broadly speaking, these kinds of stories– powered by a stop-them-before-they-kill-again clock, making their antagonists out to be finicky geniuses or horror movie monsters instead of opportunistic mediocrities– strike me as a low form of fiction. But “Furious” is as much relationship drama as procedural, animated by a quartet of excellent performances, with some things to say about abuse, exploitation and love along the way.

Although “Furious,” created by Elizabeth Meriwether (“New Girl,” “Dying for Sex”), acknowledges an inspirational debt to the 1987 Theresa Russell-Debra Winger film “Black Widow,” all it really preserves are a couple of names, the idea of a female serial killer and an emotional relationship with the woman hunting her. The killer is Catherine (Lola Petticrew), a petite young woman who goes about in a variety of wigs, under a variety of names, careful to mask in public. Her murdering is not a compulsion but a mission, like Jeanne Moreau in “The Bride Wore Black.”

Her nemesis is Alice Black (Emmy Rossum), a former police detective



Scoot McNairy and Emmy Rossum in a scene from the new Hulu series “Furious.”

now answering phones for the FBI. She became persona non grata in the NYPD after identifying her detective boyfriend (Jake Lacy as Marshall) as the person who put her in the hospital, because, you know, cops. One day a request comes from former colleague Danny Kelly (Scoot McNairy) to assist him in investigating the homicide we see Catherine commit at the top of the series.

Various elements of the crime bring to mind an earlier killing; Alice believes they’re connected

and might have something to do with sex trafficking or, eventually, a Jane Doe cold case. This brings her to the desk of Nora Washington (Quincy Tyler Bernstine), who also happens to be running the very FBI department Alice has been hoping to join. “You requested my squad,” says Nora. “Why do you want to work in the basement on sex crimes and crimes against children– do you hate yourself?” Maybe she does– she orchestrates internet dates where foreplay is a fistfight, and has some relevant trauma in

her past.

Sharing scenes with the other principal characters, intense or sensitive as the moment requires, Alice is the hub around whom the series revolves and hurtles forward. Danny, who found himself isolated in the department when he said he believed her, is her only friend. (“But here’s the crazy s-. You don’t ... talk to me anymore, either.”) Nora, who has a hard edge and a drinking problem, has a few things to teach her, sometimes with a quote from Balzac (“Laws are spiderwebs

through which the big flies pass and the little ones get caught”) and Beckett (the dead “make a noise like feathers”) or a tale from Greek mythology. (“I’m not a former cop. I went to a fancy school, and I’m very smart,” she says, very drunk.)

As to Catherine, she is a mix of a sly fox and a wounded bird. She may be manipulative and murderous, but as we’re given reasons to dislike her victims, a collection of rich white people– with one sad exception– and because Alice feels con-

nected to her in some way, and because she’s had a terrible life, there is not a little of the protagonist in her antagonist. There are some sad ironies stitched into the plot, and an upsetting late twist, though the show doesn’t wallow in it. We understand that Catherine has her reasons, and in a strange way we want to see her carry out her mission. She may be a killer, but she isn’t the villain.

It’s not perfect. We are not surprised at least as much as we are. Some of the plot points strain credulity. There are some old-school jurisdictional clashes between the police and the FBI (as in every fourth episode of “The Closer”), and a heaping helping of professional jealousy within departments.

But the show stays fascinating less for the plot than for the performers. Rossum attacks her role as if playing a Greek tragedy. (The hair redoubles the impression.) McNairy, one of TV’s most likable actors, brings warmth. Petticrew evokes broken innocence. Bernstine finds new notes in a role that typically runs to cliché.

I also want to mention the great Hope Davis as the sister of a victim, the son of a well-connected mogul with something to hide, and especially Steve Way, as Alden (“Ramy”), a force for good in Catherine’s life, and for humor in the series; born with spinal muscular atrophy, he manages some excellent physical comedy in his motorized wheelchair. The direction (Brian Kirk helmed the first two episodes) is crisp and matter of fact, staying out of the way, which is all you can ask when the writing is good and the actors are too.

‘FURIOUS’
How to watch: Now streaming on Hulu.