

DOING WHATEVER A SPIDER CAN IN 1080P

SPIDER-MAN

THE HIGH-DEFINITION TRILOGY

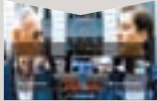


Blu-ray Disc

MOVIE DETAILS

Release date: **Out now**Director: **Sam Raimi**Cast: **Tobey Maguire,****Kirsten Dunst,****James Franco**Cert: **12**Distributor: **Sony****Pictures Home****Entertainment**Years made: **2002,****2004, 2007**Running time: **121 mins,****127 mins, 140 mins**

DISC DETAILS

HD formats: **Blu-ray**Audio/visual: **Dolby****Digital TrueHD****5.1/1.85:1, Dolby****Digital TrueHD****5.1/2.40:1, Dolby****Digital TrueHD****5.1/2.40:1,**Number of discs: **4**SRP: **£49.99**Find it for: **£39.99****(Play.com)**

EXTRAS

Commentary with

director and cast •

Commentary with

filmmakers • Photo

gallery • Snow Patrol

Signal Fire music video •

• 'Grains Of Sand - Building

Sandman' (14 mins) • 'Re-

imagining The Goblin'

(11 mins) • 'Covered In

Black - Creating Venom'

(15 mins) • 'Hanging

On... Gwen Stacy And

The Collapsing Floor' (11

mins) • 'Fighting, Flying

And Driving - The Stunts'

(20 mins) • 'Tangled Web:

The Love Triangles Of

Spider-Man 3' (10 mins)

• 'Wall Of Water' (8 mins)

• 'Inside The Editing

Room' (4 mins) • 'The

Science Of Sound' (17

mins) • 'On Location New

York - From Rooftops To

Backstreets' (13 mins) •

'On Location Cleveland

- The Chase On Euclid

Avenue' (7 mins)

THERE IS SIMPLY no film franchise as important to Sony as *Spider-Man*. The entertainment giant fought long and hard to win the rights to bring the wallcrawler to the screen and the rewards have been plentiful. A hugely successful, blockbusting franchise, the *Spider-Man* trilogy is Sony's flagship series and as such its Blu-ray release was always going to be highly anticipated. Indeed, it has been fairly assumed that this was the release that was going to be a showcase for high-definition entertainment.

Unfortunately, though, despite being a well-presented collection, the boxset doesn't shine as much as we expected it to, leaving us feeling something we rarely are after watching Spidey swing through Raimi's New York: underwhelmed.

To a certain extent, we were less surprised with the relatively disappointing presentation of the first film. It's quickly becoming apparent that HD presentation can often mean that dated special effects are worsened. So when, in the first film, a young Peter Parker is pursuing his uncle's murderer, we weren't shocked to contemplate how we could ever have

suspended our disbelief in the face of what is so clearly PS2-level CG. Equally we weren't too offended by the later set pieces – while the enjoyment is diminished slightly by the transfer highlighting the unconvincing CG, it would be unfair to heavily criticise effects that, at the time, were attempting something quite new. What is more frustrating is how the transfer copes in the darker scenes. Too much clarity is lost, and details are nowhere near as crisp as they should be. Daytime scenes fare much better, particularly the one involving the Green Goblin's attack during Macy Gray's performance – Raimi's glowing cinematography is never more impressive than it is here. But much of the film's action takes place at night and things are nowhere near as good an advert for the format as they should be.

Satisfyingly, things improve for the terrific *Spider-Man 2*. Sure, there are still problems brought about by dated effects but for the most part the film benefits from the HD update. The level of detail is high throughout, most notably during the early scenes in which a troubled Parker

when the quality dips, the polish giving way to an annoying grain, but these moments are few and so are unable to hinder the enjoyment too much.

Oddly, however, *Spider-Man 3* is less pristinely presented than its predecessor. Though the lighter scenes are arguably even better than 2's, there are several moments set at night that fail to impress, most obviously the early fisticuffs between Spidey and the new, less silly-looking-but-still-rubbish Goblin. The darkness simply seems to soak up too much of the textures and detail that inform the very best transfers. It's a genuine shame too, as there are glimpses of HD brilliance here, the first formation of Sandman one such example, so we know the transfers could have been excellent – instead they're merely very good.

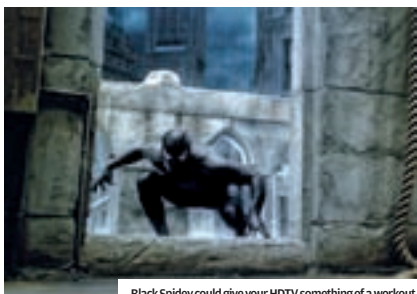
The films themselves are as they were. No additional footage has been added and no re-edits have been made. With the first film, Raimi opens the franchise quietly but such is its style and respect for the story that it's mostly enjoyable. Its tone is pitch perfect, set pieces frequently decent and inventive, and it's a far

“THERE ARE GLIMPSES OF HD BRILLIANCE HERE BUT WE EXPECTED MUCH MORE”

bumbles his way through an unfriendly New York. The quality of the transfer really helps immerse you in the city and enhances the experience. The brilliant treatment of colours similarly affects the more spectacular scenes, the bank robbery in particular benefiting from such a well-suited transfer. There are times

superior opening instalment to the series than Singer's first *X-Men*.

With this franchise, though, it's very much a case of second the best. Come *Spider-Man 2*, Raimi is determined to have a lot more fun and the film is all the better for it. The *Evil Dead* director delivers some of the most inventive, captivating



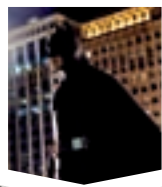
Black Spidey could give your HDTV something of a workout.

MORE OF THE SAME

BATMAN BEGINS
A triumphant comic book adaptation done justice by an impressive transfer. Currently only available on HD DVD.



Skin tones are pretty solid throughout, which is kind of lucky, as close-ups feature often.



Doc Ock's peculiar appendages come to life in high definition.

Being such a flagship title, we expected much, much more impressive extras.



Venom was just one villain too many for Spider-Man 3.

set pieces of the past few years – it will be a long, long time before the film's frankly superb train sequence is beaten in the thrill stakes – and injects the film with an almost mischievous buoyancy, marking many of the scenes with his own unmistakable personality (Doc Ock's surgery and Parker's *Raindrops Are Fallin' On My Head* montage to name just two). It's terrific entertainment from start to finish and easily one of the best comic book movies yet.

Sadly, the fine form doesn't continue. Three films in and the series has lost its warmth. It's no longer the very human tale of an amazing superhero but a vehicle for set pieces and a factory for toys. The whole affair is messy, stretched by too many villains and even more plotlines. There are odd moments of fun, Tobey Maguire delivers his best performance of the series, and special effects fans will be left sated, but for the most part it's one poor decision after another.

Most disappointing, however, are the extras on offer. Of the three discs, only

Spider-Man 3 has any and they're as typical as you could imagine. A series of small featurettes unenthusiastically describing the various mechanics of the film are supplemented with a pair of uninspired commentaries, making the special features are utterly forgettable. Including bonus content to the earlier films would have gone some way to redeeming the poor effort here but it would still be some BD-J content and an HD feature or two from being cutting edge. As it is, it's barely passable and, as with the transfers, we expected more.

AARON ASADI



FILM ★★★★★
EXTRAS ★★★★★
PICTURE ★★★★★
AUDIO ★★★★★

This should have been an outstanding package, but as it is it's a regrettably ordinary one.

VERDICT ★★★★★

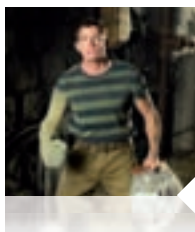


The effects in the first Spider-Man film aren't done any favours by the HD transfer.



STANDOUT VISUAL
RAIL FAN

Without doubt this is one of the best action sequences of the past few years. Constantly inventive and sensationally paced, the battle between Doc Ock and Spidey stays in the memory long after viewing. It looks extremely good in high definition as well.



STANDOUT EXTRA
GRAINS OF SAND

Informing the most impressive special effect of the third movie, the technique behind the creation of the Sandman was always going to make for an interesting feature. A shame that it's not in high definition and a bigger shame that there aren't better features on the disc.



STANDOUT AUDIO
SOUNDS OF SAND

Arguably the most interesting scene in the third film is Sandman's creation, and not least because of the use of sound. The stirring score and satisfying sound effects are both treated superbly by the TrueHD soundtrack, the scene itself a great demonstration of the technology.

COMMENTARY GOLD "There was a mandate put on it... there was a desire to put in Venom." Sam Raimi.