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Right, so since I got a bottle of Australian white going through my system, its just as well I capitalise on that & do a drunk movie review. Its "The Chronicles Of Riddick", a film I have a love-hate-relationship with. Excellent visuals & one liners, but atrocious plot & casting.



Mute this thread if movie reviews, drunk or sober, bother you. Thanks, with a cherry on top.

This btw is the Directors cut of the film. So there's like 15 minutes of extra footage explaining to us all the bad choices David Twohy made in producing a sequel to PITCH BLACK, that clearly looked at Lord Of The Rings and then just ran through three lines of cocaine.

For what its worth, thats not a rip on Twohy himself, but realistically speaking CHRONICLES vs PITCH BLACK makes Cameron's ALIENS look like the petting zoo-sequel to "Hey, why not get a guinea pig for Christmas" pet choices of Ridley Scott's ALIEN.

Just to substantiate this claim, this is the first I dunno 15 seconds of the film. Wth is going on right?! Again, stupifying visuals but context people!



In comes Judy Dench with some very heavy exposition. "They are an army unlike any other. Crusading towards a place called Underworld...". Seriously, if you have to drop that kind of information in the first 20 seconds, you should know you have a narrative problem.

I mean JFC I cannot stress this enough: The explanation of what the Lord Marshall is (half dead half alive) fills an entire damn movie by itself. Here its a 15 second narrative.



"In normal times evil would be fought by good. But in times like these, well, it should be fought by another kind of evil." That's the second huge issue with Chronicles: It tries to portray Riddick as a bad guy or anti-hero, when realistically speaking he's just the plain hero.

Enter Riddick, on an icy world, chased by "Mercs" incl probably one of the best casting choices, Nick Chinlund as Toombs. He's part of the reason I am fond of this flick.



Again, settings and set design on this film are ambitious and good. It's what keeps you interested.

Bad guys chasing Riddick here are basically just another form of exposition establishing how bad ass Riddick is. "He just ghosted two guys and we never even saw him.". Its done ok though so we really ain't get bored. Especially the timing is good, all done within a minute or so.

The other part is shot composition. "You made three mistakes...". Look at Riddick here. Excellent setup with a good punch line. Lovely.



"What slam pays one point five for a convict?" Again, short and sweet. Picture perfect camera. All just very lovely.



"Well lesson learned, no such word as friend." The plot keeps rolling finally tying the sequel to the original. Again, the visuals are why we are watching.



First shot of the Directors Cut: On the prison planet Crematoria. It adds next to nothing to the plot except giving us a look at the badly miscast Alexa Davalos as Jack/Kyra.



Next DC addition: the whole, aggravating, Furyan angle. Now Riddick is the Chosen One, not some random loser who nearly lost his life in a trashcan because he was expendable.



This IMO is the biggest issue the DC magnifies (its present in the release cut too): Riddick, who previously just made things complicated courtesy of being a freak, now has some sort of silly destiny directly tying him into the plot.

Riddick approaching Helion Prime spaceport in his stolen merc ship. Again an example of where this film shines. The visuals are incredible IMO.



Notably the planet, by implication, is majority Muslim or certainly not Christian. A pluralistic society respecting many traditions of the human race. The film was made in 2004.

We catch up with one of two (outside of Riddick) surviving characters of the original movie, who evidently made it to "New Mecca". The background chatter fills us in on the bad guys aka the Necromongers.

Riddick of course is already there and shaving his head like a soldier. And Keith David (underutilised as Imam) has a quick heart to heart after revealing himself as the contractor hiring the mercs. Its all very convoluted, you'd think he could have just asked.

I messed up this screenshot but it looks cool. The comet is supposedly the Necromongers making their approach on Helion Prime.



So here's my grief (again): Shitloads of exposition to explain who the bad guys are, and why Imam put a bounty on Riddick. Who apparently all by himself is supposed to stop an army of planet-invading maniacs. As I said, the plot is pretty thin.

Imam is fretting "My god how do I save my family." Well taking off in a spaceship dont seem too hard, you tried this?

"And whose throat is this?". Enter Judi Dench. Part of the convoluted but underexplained plot that drags us along.



Dench aka Aeron is apparently "an envoy of the elemental race". Now here's the thing: The film remains coy on whether there are true alien lifeforms in this story, or whether they are all just humans, divided by time and space, and going their own way. I suspect its the latter.

Its another thing that to me makes the story more, not less, intriguing. But the movie handles this aspect badly, despite ridiculous amounts of exposition on the Necromongers previously.

Imam: "There is a story of young male Furyans, strangled at birth..." and thus begins the retconning of Pitch Black properly. This is all IMO extremely silly.

Riddick doesn't care about it all very much, I guess to establish his anti hero credentials, which leads Imam to mention "her". The piece that connects two films and is supposed to, well, make sense for Riddick's motivation.

A short fight ensues with Helion Prime security forces, but really its just a piece to establish Riddick can see in the dark. Its done ok, but quick and I don't care.

The dialogue after is more relevant, if only to establish Riddick's motivation to rescue Jack. This is key because realistically speaking resolving the Necromonger issue is just collateral for Riddick. The movie fails to emphasize this.



"Riddick. Are you gonna stop the new monsters now?" Whoever put this scene in the movie needs to be banned for life from film-making. Easily the worst line in movie history. Sorry kid.



Thankfully we get back to the good stuff, and one of the most visually defining pieces of the film: the Necromonger invasion of Helion Prime. The following minutes are very very good.



This really is pure art. And militarily sound, in a hybrid WW2/Gulf War kinda way.



Star Wars had less visual extravaganza in three sequels than Riddick has in under three minutes.

The Necros just slam one of their ships into the heart of local Helion Prime defence and the lights go out. And its not even a suicide run because the Necro ship is designed to do this and survive.



Again, look at these visuals. This film was produced on a 100 million \$ budget. Its completely mesmerizing IMO. And again, operationally sound as the Necros sorty their fighters from the carrier that just did a bullseye on planetary defences.



And yes, the Necros are clearly shown to take losses, but they replace them with ten new fighters and a frigate railgunning ground targets. Compare this to the brain dead combat situations the recent Star Wars flicks presented.



So anyway, the air defence for Helion Prime clearly doesnt go well.

Which makes this next part all the more irritating because the ground element of the invasion is...light infantry? Seriously, its all foot soldiers.



And their centre piece is a soldier borne suicide bomb to kill the enemy. This is extremely odd.



Supposedly this is meant to illustrate the fanaticism of Necro troops but its also just dumb.

Anyway, in the mids of this, Riddick, against all odds, is trying to rescue Imam and his family.

This is not made easier by the Necros employing some sort of telepaths to snoop out surviving elements of the enemy. This seems an extremely tedious approach to urban combat given we are looking at a settlement of a few millions.

Lets just put it the way it is: Whoever came up with the air element of combat clearly was in a separate group to the ground combat writers. Who should all be sacked.

Anyway, Riddick races to save Imam and fails. Another Pitch Black character biting the dust.



Post invasion administrative actions: reveal of the main bad guy, badly miscast Colm Feore as Lord Marshall, and Thandie Newton as Dame Vaako. Karl Urban as Vaako is not ideal but the least ridiculous.

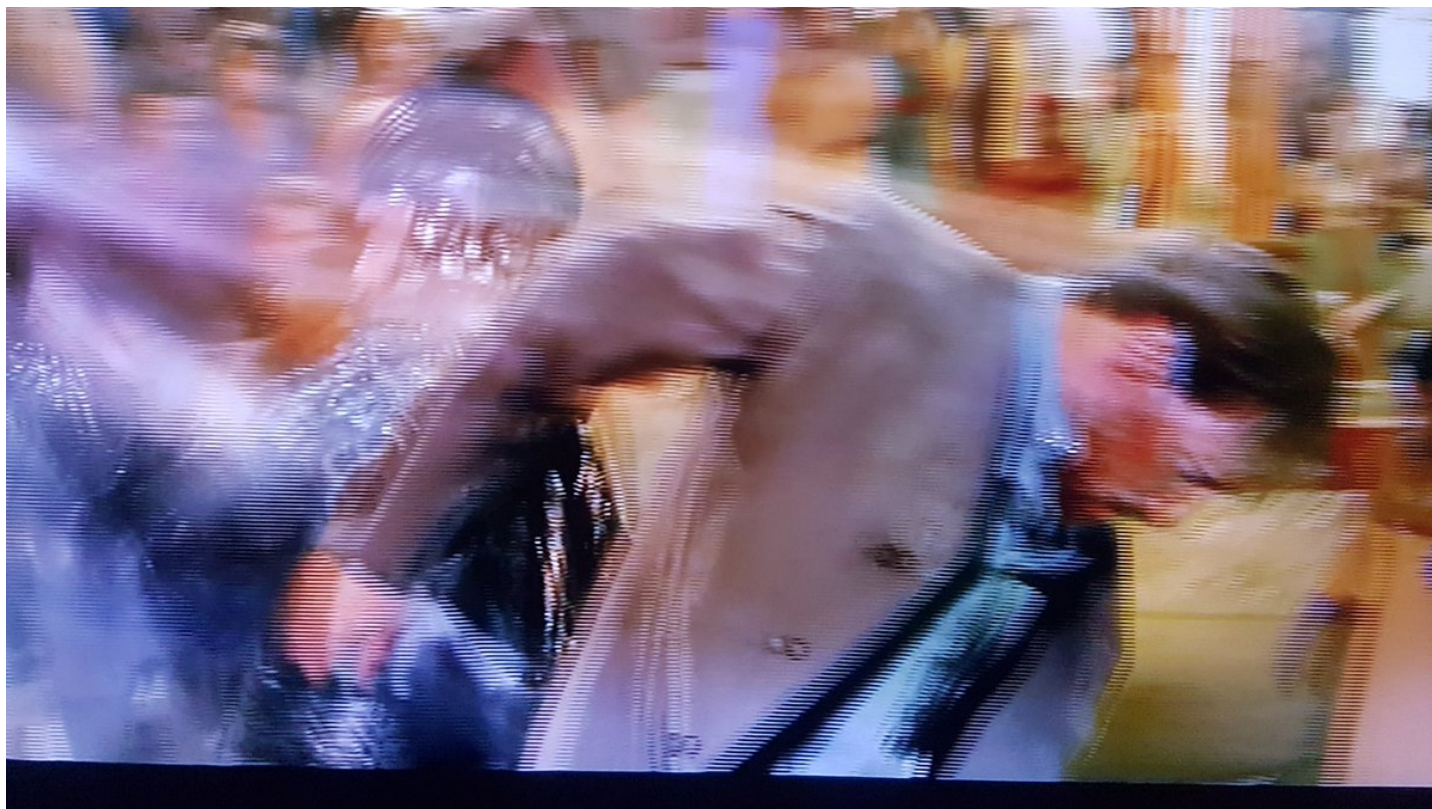


Great visuals once more, but the "Purifier" portrayed by Linus Roache has to be the worst of the bunch in casting decisions. Zero charisma, even for what is ostensibly a pencil pusher role in the film.



"Threshold. Take us to the threshold." The Necros keep rambling on about the "Underverse" but given the military display we have just seen, the rhetoric display right now seems like Parks and Recreation.

Of course the Lord Marshall has the ability to separate soul from body, or at least put on a display to that effect. Immediately offsetting all the nonsense rhetoric preceding this show and make the planet fall in line, whatever that means.



Meanwhile Riddick crashes the party to kill the guy who killed Imam. Very straightforward, and very Riddick. They should have just dispensed with the Furyan nonsense vs this.

"What do you think of this blade? - I think its a half gram heavy on the back end." These are the one liners I mean. Again fully in line with Pitch Black. No need for silly backstory.



Anyway, the Necro boss is getting suspicious on account of Riddick now being the chosen one, so instead we get a weird convoluted plot about checking out his background.

So now Riddick gets subjected to some sort of scanning revealing his Furyan background, setting the backend of the movie plot in motion. Half arsed security in there given the gravity of the situation for the Necro boss.



"Kill the Riddick!" And thus Colm Feore retreats within his own ship. Anyway, Riddick gets out of course, and instead of getting pinned down by the Uebermenschen its the mercenaries capturing him. Make of that what you will.

"Let me guess. A five man crew this time." Again, the film shines with one liners over convoluted plot.



The new merc crew is diverse and includes future Battlestar Galactica officer/traitor Ty Olsson.



In any case, the air combat writers crew is back in action and dropping this neat decoy confusion tactic on us, which will have the necros delay their pursuit.



Karl Urban catches on soon enough in front of another nice visual setpiece but its all for the dogs because he already signed on for the Doom-movie at this stage.



There's also some sort of strategic discourse to the whole planetary invasion thing but its like five guys and more on the platoon level of evaluations. Anywho, the Lord Marshall wants Riddick killed more than anything, wink wink nudge nudge.



Which leads us into another needlessly complicated plot element of Lady Vaako scheming against the Lord Marshall. This entire sub-element is completely unnecessary, given how Vaako in the Necro tradition has plenty of motivation to kill the Lord Marshall, if he appears weak. ■■■■

Oh and there's of course domestic violence leading to intercourse. Because of course there is.

The most hilarious part coming up: Lady Vaako promising a blowjob to Vaako while he sits on the Necromonger throne, so they move into the throne room, just to witness Aereon (Judy Dench) talking to the Lord Marshall. To call this intellectually insulting is an understatement.

In the meantime our merc crew with Riddick in tow gets him to the place he wants to go, the creatively named "Crematoria". Toombs: "If I'd own this place and hell, I'd rent this place out and live in hell." It just about works.



"Plotted course: good. Angle of approach: not good." Deadpan humor saving this film once more.



Riddick on the train ride down to prison dispenses with Ty Olsson, after the latter threatening him with stealing his goggles. Merc leader: "Four man split!". Again, the film works best when it's short and to the point.

There's an amusing amount of squabble and banter between the mercs and prison crew over what is being paid for Riddick. Its all very meaningless and still better than the Necromonger storyline. "Should have taken the money, Toombs!".



Meanwhile Riddick engages in some world class Olympics gymnastics to break free of his restraints and establishes some line of command between the prison inmates.

A meaningless story line about the theoretical leader of the prison inmates ensues, but Riddick is "just passing through", so really all those characters are kinda pointless.

Except of course for Jack, the girl from Pitch Black who calls herself Kyra now, "a new animal" and I'm sorry but I lost interest already.



Meanwhile the Necros are looking for "the Riddick" and say what you like but their gear is pretty sweet. Also nice soundtrack riffing off the Aliens military theme.



Onboard the Purifier is scoping out the motivations of Vaako, and the character remains uninteresting, despite his actors best efforts.



We get a third plot track providing us with exposition about why the Lord Marshall wants Riddick dead. Prophecy, untimely death etc bla bla bla.



Because things are clearly not complicated enough yet, the prison guards release some sort of dog jaguar alien monsters to feed among the prison inmates, while they are trying to rape Jack.



Naturally Riddick makes friends with the Jaguar monsters and proceeds to kill a guard with a tea cup. So glass half full on this particular plot adventure for me.

Jack engages in superfluous plot exposition about being a stupid teenager and father issues. I buy none of it.

In any case we are now moving into the prison escape part of the rogue anti hero chased by bounty hunters vs galactic invasion force-plot. Which again tells you pretty much all there is about this flick. There's just too much going on.

"Should have taken the money, Toombs." The one liners still work though.



Escape from Alcatraz, but on an alien planet with the sun coming up to kill you if you cannot make it. "Its gonna be one speed. Mine." Its all relatively well done but again, it feels like watching a sequel to Chronicles, not the film itself.



Because this is an action movie, there also needs to be another mostly pointless action scene.



As expected, the "escape prison before the scorching sun kills you"-element eventually runs into the scorching sun trying to kill the escapees, so we have Riddick valiantly rescuing Kyra against all odds not being part of the Riddick-equation.

In the process another black guy buys the farm.

This is less controversial than you might think, given most of the white guys also die before long.

Whatever, the Necromongers finally landed on Crematoria, so naturally there is another big clash coming up. The prison leader guy is making peace with the fact he is going to die last, in a short scene no one in the audience will care about.

Another great setpiece though. Again, this film is atrocious on content but stellar on the garnish.



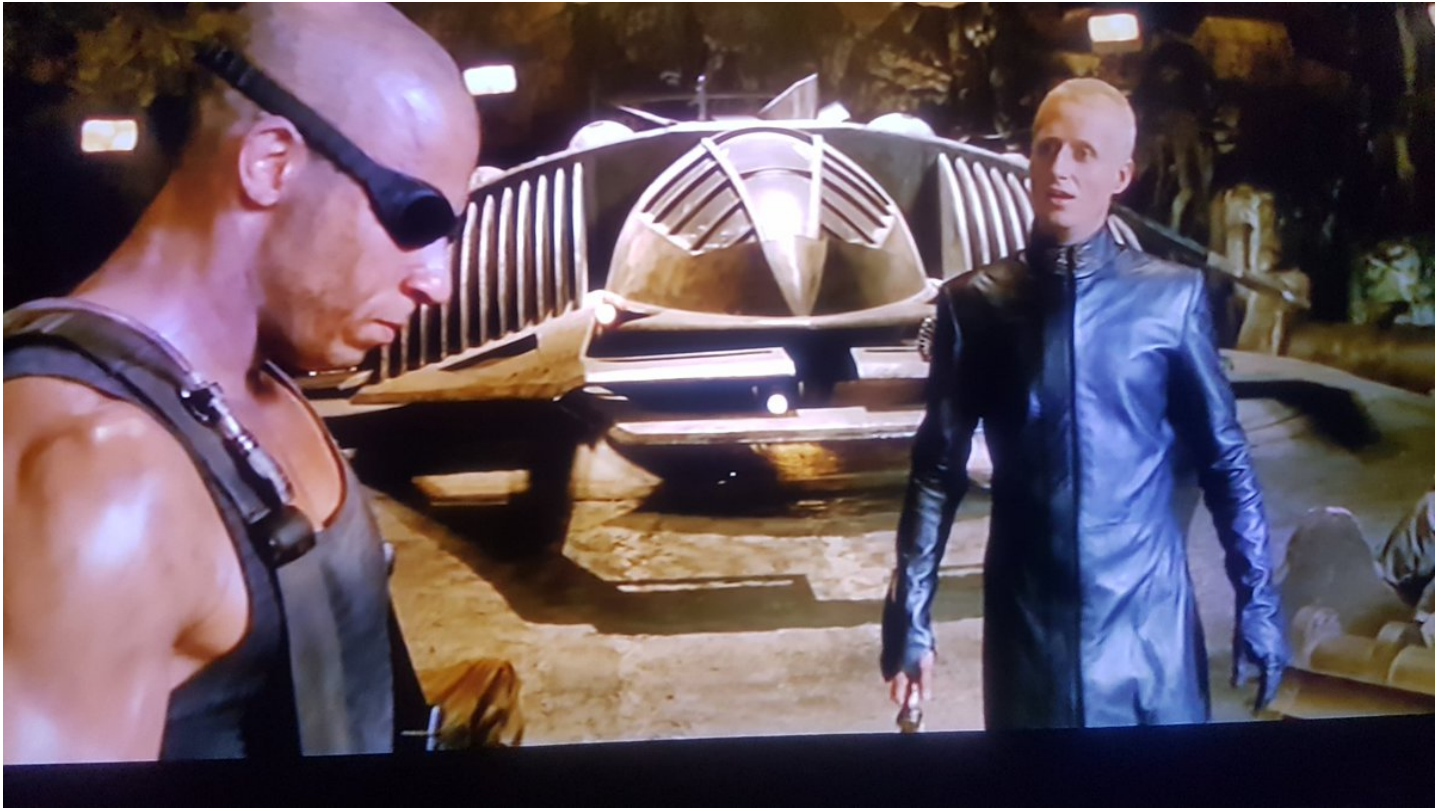
A convoluted action scene. Vin Diesel really giving his all here but the cutting and wire work is sub par and makes a three way fight (Necros, prison guards, inmates) much less interesting than it should be.



Directors Cut again. Inserting a vastly improbable revelation/explosion to save Riddick's skin from the Necros. A picture perfect example of why most Directors cuts suck and damage a film more instead of "fixing" it.



Back to the normal film, with the Purifier revealing himself as a fellow Furry. Interesting for this otherwise totally unremarkable character, but also vastly improbable given the entire premise of this film.



I've just used "vastly improbable" twice in two subsequent tweets, and while normally I write that off as my terrible tweeting, it really sums up the plot of this film.

Anyway, the Purifier walks into self-immolation and I feel like there would be more worthwhile ways to redeem yourself but anyway...

Because the film is not yet complicated enough, Imam's family is reinserted into the plot at the 11th hour, while Vaako is semi-comfortable in his promotion for not really killing Riddick.

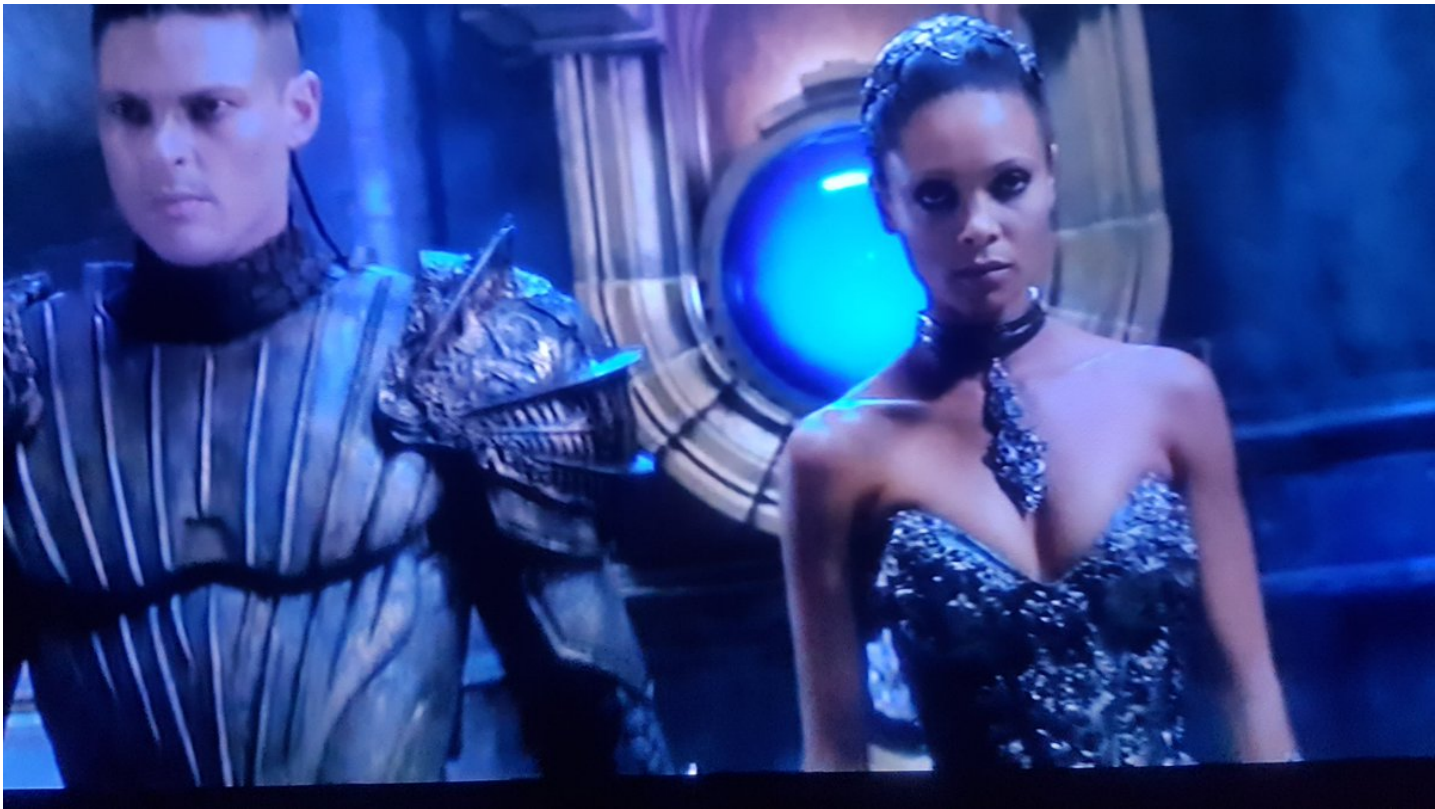
Riddicks glowing eyes dont do much seeing in the dark in this flick but they are still used to good effect. Even when he, again very imrobably, runs right into Dame Vaako, who proceeds to warn her husband. Presumably while he reads all three pages of the Doom movie-script.



As the stakes are apparently not high enough yet, the Necros still plan to nuke the planet. A move presumably dependant on Riddick not succeeding in assassinating the Lord Marshall.



Vaako and Lady Vaako doing the badass walk while the Lord Marshall realises Riddick is still alive.



After a long and tedious journey of course its a one on one while Kyra is kinda sorta converted. There's little gravity here, for all sorts of reasons.



Special Effects really trying hard here to make Colm Feore an even match for Vin Diesel. Its basically all down to his Flash superpowers.

To Feore's "Give me your soul." Diesel replies "Fuck you." and it really drives home the narrative disconnect in this film.

In any case, Lady Vaako's idea of her husband killing Lord Marshall fails. Riddick disposes of the bad guy and the ending is pretty much the best part of this miserably convoluted plot.



Which is Riddick as the leader of the bad guys. Oh, presumably he didnt nuke the planet either. Its hard to say because there's kinda no resolution on that end. So there you have it. Splendid imagery, good soundtrack, and a plot trying to not trip over its shoelaces. 5/10.

