

'Incredibles 2' shows fantastic vs ordinary, says Hunter

LONDON, July 10, (RTRS): The plot of the new Incredibles movie features a heroine whose life swings between high adventure and hum-drum normality, American actress Holly Hunter, who plays Helen, otherwise known as Elastigirl, said on Monday.

Hunter was speaking after the British premiere of "Incredibles 2" at London's British Film Institute on Sunday, where she was joined on the red carpet by co-star Samuel L. Jackson, who plays the character Frozone.

The film features a family of superheroes who also have an ordinary family life.

"People really want the fantastic and they recognize the (ordinary). They recognize the fights and the stresses and the tensions and the bickering and the fussing and the challenges and the competition that we see with this family," Hunter told Reuters on Monday.

Elastigirl becomes a poster girl for superheroes who are outlawed. She juggles family life with a full-time job as well as fighting the evil 'Screenslaver'.

Hunter said "having it all" was a difficult concept to live up to as a career woman and mother. This is recognised in writer-director Brad Bird's film.

"Most women have some conflict with leaving family and a lot of men feel some insecurity about being the primary caretaker," she said. "She will leave it all in one second to run back home if she thinks that Mr. Incredible can't do it."

Hunter believes the changes in equality and diversity in Hollywood is "not a trend" but a "renaissance" though more is needed to be done.

"Incredibles 2" is out in UK cinemas on July 13.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: "Ben Is Back," the drama starring Lucas Hedges and Julia Roberts, is getting an awards-season release on Dec 7.

LD Entertainment, Lionsgate, and Roadside Attractions will partner on US distribution for the film, which will be directed by Lucas Hedges' real-life father, Peter Hedges.

Lucas Hedges, who was nominated for an Academy Award for "Manchester by the Sea," will portray a charming yet troubled man who returns home to his unsuspecting family on Christmas Eve. His wary mother (Roberts) welcomes her beloved son's return, but soon learns that he is still very much in harm's way. Courtney B. Vance and Kathryn Newton also star.

Black Bear Pictures & Color Force produced the film with 30West and Black Bear fully financing the project. Producers are Nina Jacobson, Brad Simpson, Teddy Schwarzman and Peter Hedges. Executive producers are Daniel Steinman, Micah Green, Dan Friedkin, Ben Stillman, Michael Heimler, Jane Evans, Mickey Liddell, and Pete Shilaimon.

The acquisition was announced Monday by Mickey Liddell of LD Entertainment, Lionsgate President of Acquisitions and Co-Productions Jason Constantine, and Roadside Attractions co-founders Howard Cohen & Eric d'Arbeloff.

"Drawing from Peter Hedges' incredibly moving script and direction, Julia Roberts and Lucas Hedges deliver career-high perfor-

mances," said Cohen and d'Arbeloff. "In a role that is current and important, Julia Roberts is transformative as a mom fighting to save her son. And we are thrilled to reunite with Lucas Hedges after his Oscar-nominated turn in 'Manchester by the Sea,' he is unforgettable here as a young man trying to re-connect with his family for Christmas."



LOS ANGELES: New Line has purchased a comedy pitch, "The Come Up," an original story from "Sorry to Bother You" co-star **Jermaine Fowler**, Variety has learned. Fowler, who also stars in "Superior Donuts," will star and also serve as executive producer.

The project will also feature **Lil Rel Howery** ("Get Out," "Uncle Drew") and the upcoming Fox series "Rel") and brothers **Keith Lucas** and **Kenneth Lucas** as co-stars. The screenplay will be written by **Michael Starrbury** ("The Inevitable Defeat of Mister & Pete" and "Central Park Five").

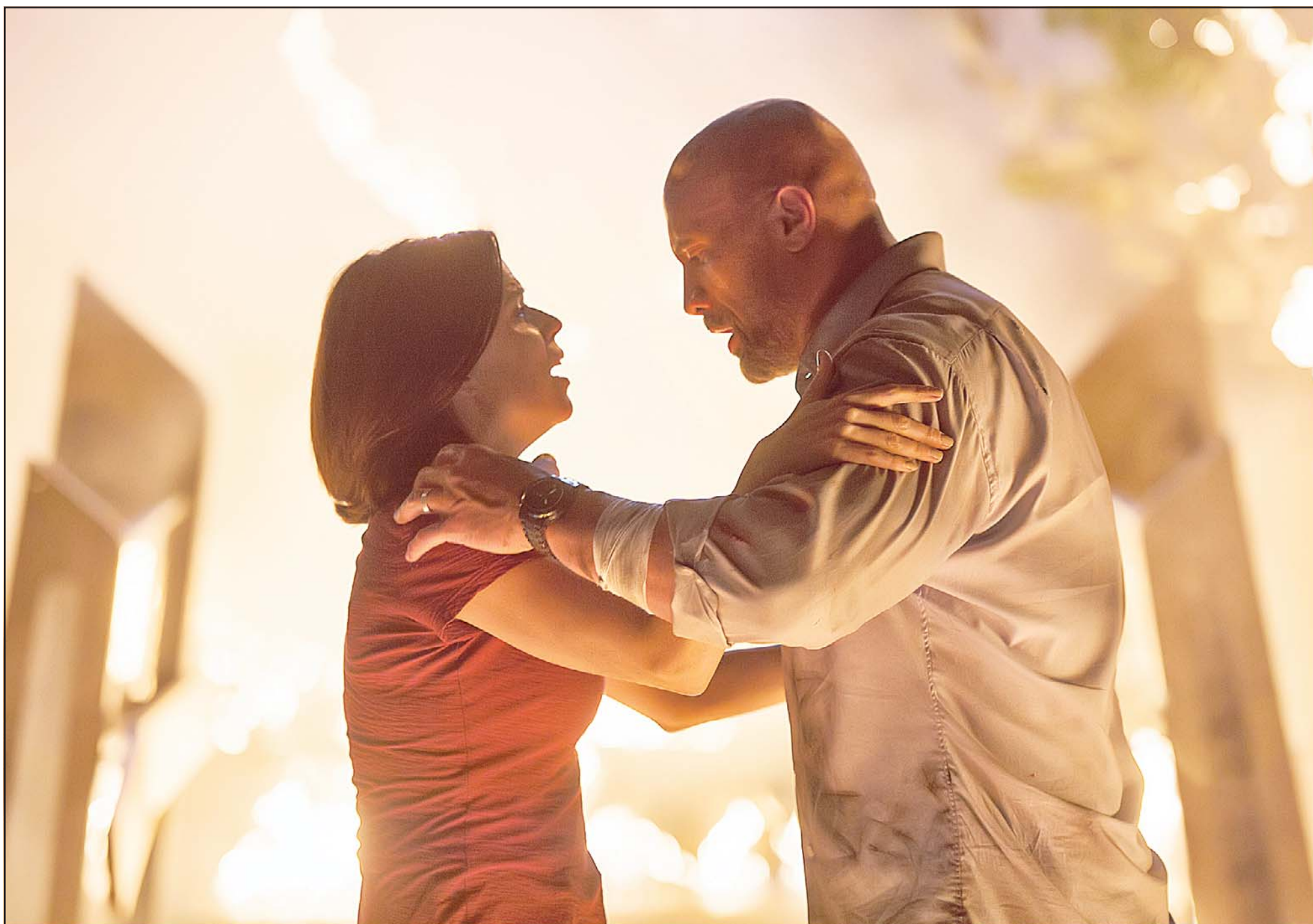
"I am excited to be collaborating with New Line Cinema, Wrigley Pictures and our screenwriter Michael Starrbury on 'The Come Up' — a project I have been passionate about for years now," Fowler said in a statement. "Since bringing the concept to them it's been nothing but synergy and raw excitement. As an actor, it is a dream come true to be working opposite my comedy brothers, Lil Rel Howery and The Lucas Brothers. I am grateful they've come on board to tell this hilarious and inspiring story with me."

"The Come Up" will be produced by **John Rickard** through his Wrigley Pictures banner. Plot details are being kept under wraps.

Film

Variety

Features



This image released by Universal Pictures shows Neve Campbell (left), and Dwayne Johnson in a scene from 'Skyscraper.' (AP)

Film

Dwayne Johnson engages audience with eye-rolling action

'Skyscraper' built on solid Rock

By Peter Debruge

People do ridiculous things in movies all the time. In "Skyscraper," terrorists purposefully set a 240-story building on fire in order to get at a flash drive locked away in the billionaire's penthouse on top. That seems like an awful lot of trouble for a heist, and yet, it's nothing compared with the extravagant lengths Dwayne Johnson's character, Will Sawyer — a security consultant with a prosthetic leg and the world's strongest finger muscles — will go to, to save his family, who are trapped inside.

Ridiculous is the name of the game in "Skyscraper," an eye-rolling action movie delivered with a straight face by "Dodgeball: An Underdog Story" director Rawson Marshall Thurber, who recognizes that no one wants to watch a realistic rescue story ("Cat Saved From Tree," say, or "Backdraft") when they can have "The Rock's Wife and Kids Nearly Burned to a Crisp in Blazing Building." On the scale that ranges, relying on Johnson's invaluable ability to engage the audience while defying physics, common sense, and the sheer limits of human stamina.

This is the kind of movie where, to break back into the burning building, Sawyer pulls himself up 100 or so stories on a construction crane and leaps across a 40-foot chasm to an open window, somehow finding the upper-body strength to pull himself through the crumbling ledge (all of this takes less time than it did for the monsters in "Rampage" to scale far shorter structures). Maybe they were all studio plants, but the audience at a Los Angeles press screening erupted into applause after that scene, and at least two other equally outrageous set-pieces, which just goes to show that suspension of disbelief doesn't stand in the way of appreciating stunts previously confined to mind-benders like "The Matrix."

To backtrack a bit, "Skyscraper" opens with a hostage situation in which former FBI operative

Sawyer fails to anticipate a grisly twist, losing his leg and several teammates in the process but gaining a combat-surgeon wife (Neve Campbell, too little seen these days but nicely used here) who happens to be on duty when they bring him in. A decade later, Sawyer has switched jobs, building such an ace reputation as a security consultant that he's hired by Hong Kong developer Zhao Long Ji (Singaporean star Chin Han) to protect "the Pearl," billed as "the safest super-tall structure" in the world, three times the height of the Empire State Building.

Aspire

Where other buildings aspire to scrape the sky, the Pearl punches through the other side, looming two-thirds of a mile high. Plus, it's pretty, rejecting straight lines in favor of organic curves — like a cross between Gaudi's Sagrada Familia cathedral (still only half-built) and those long wooden staffs the wizards use to fight in "The Lord of the Rings," complete with pearl-shaped globe at the top (which houses an elaborate virtual-reality space custom-designed to deliver an exciting finale). Conveniently, Zhao hasn't started to sell the residential upper half, which is just as well, since it would house about 10,000 people, and it's much simpler for Sawyer to focus on rescuing just the three members of his family, and maybe his boss.

Thurber's script introduces a twist in which the cops think that maybe Sawyer is responsible for the fire (not that it matters), along with a handful of double-crosses that it mistakes for "surprises," but mostly, it's the kind of thing that could have been written in crayon by 12-year-olds — who, let's be honest, make up roughly half the target audience. The other half are Chinese viewers, which no doubt explains why the movie takes place in Hong Kong and stars a predominantly Asian cast (though most of the primary roles go to Westerners), since Universal

is clearly counting on the Chinese market to generate most of the film's business. It should be noted that none of the film lensed in Hong Kong, shooting primarily in Vancouver instead, though it's all the screen time given to the CG building that makes the more impressive illusion.

Maybe fire and gravity work differently in Hong Kong. One certainly gets that impression as Thurber manipulates such forces to suit various stunt sequences, although his general tactic is to keep things moving so quickly that audiences don't stop to question such liberties or the obvious logical gaps along the way — as when villainous Kores Botha (Roland Moller) uses Sawyer's daughter to manipulate her hyper-protective papa-bear father into overriding the doors to the building's impenetrable panic room (surely it would be easier simply to save his daughter than it is to climb along the outer wall of the building, jump the turbines, and hack the subroutine panels).

Remember, through all of this, Sawyer is missing a leg, which makes it that much more insane to watch him running and jumping and karate-kicking, while Botha and his army of heavily armed bad guys make like Hans Gruber on Christmas Eve. And yet, as that allusion suggests, "Skyscraper" belongs to a tradition of lean, larger-than-life action movies that have all but disappeared from megaplexes, along with the careers of stars such as Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sylvester Stallone, and Bruce Willis. Johnson is both a throwback to that era and a significant upgrade, armed with nothing but brute strength and a roll of duct tape, seemingly capable of feats that would have been laughable coming from any other star (technically, no one can do what Sawyer does, though we are willing to buy it when he tries). This is escapism, pure and simple, and though the structure is rickety, by enlisting Johnson, Thurber ensures that his "Skyscraper" is built on solid Rock. (RTRS)

ARABO TIMES

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ROME: Actor **George Clooney** was taken to the hospital in **Sardinia** and released after being involved in an accident while riding his motorcycle, hospital officials said.

The John Paul II hospital in **Olbia** said Clooney was released Tuesday. Local media that had gathered at the hospital said Clooney is believed to have left through a side exit.

Local daily La Nuova Sardegna said the 57-year-old Clooney had been headed to a film set on Tuesday when his motorbike was hit by a car. Private Mediaset, citing gossip magazine Chi, said the accident occurred near **Costa Coralina**, in the province of Olbia.

Police had no immediate information. Calls and emails to Clooney's spokesman weren't immediately returned.

Clooney has a home on the Italian mainland, on Lake Como. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: Tom Cruise's "Mission: Impossible — Fallout" is eyeing a North American opening weekend in the \$60 million range, early tracking shows.

The lower end of estimates come in at \$48 million, while others are speculating earnings as high as \$65 million.

Tracking also revealed that total awareness is at 82%, definite interest is at 42%, and unaided awareness is a 16% for the sixth title in Paramount's durable "Mission: Impossible" franchise, which has grossed \$2.78 billion worldwide so far. "Mission: Impossible — Fallout" flies into theaters on July 27.

2015's "Rogue Nation" had a solid \$55.5 million domestic launch and wound up with \$192 million domestically and \$682 million worldwide. The highest opener in the franchise was 2000's "Mission: Impossible 2" with \$57.8 million, while 2011's "Mission: Impossible — Ghost Protocol" was the lowest at \$29.6 million. (RTRS)

SEOUL: South Korea approved a rare screening of North Korean movies at a local film festival on Tuesday, as a diplomatic thaw gains pace following two landmark summit between their leaders.

The two countries technically remain in conflict after the 1950-53

Korean War ended without a peace treaty, and all cross-border civilian contact — including trips, letters, or emails — are banned unless endorsed by both governments.

But officials have allowed three North Korean feature films and six short movies to be screened at the annual Bucheon International Fantastic Film Festival on Seoul's outskirts from July 12, organisers



Clooney



Cruise

said. (AFP)

LOS ANGELES: "Ant-Man and the Wasp" enjoyed 69% of the weekend box office in **South Korea**. Opening on Wednesday, the Walt Disney release earned \$20.9 million from 2.63 million admissions over five days. The film exceeded the opening-day

score of "Ant-Man" in six hours since opening in theaters.

Korean movies took the following three places. "The Witch: Part 1. The Subversion" slipped to second place, with a modest 40% decline from last week. The South Korean revenge thriller earned \$3.61 million between Friday and Sunday for a total of \$13.9 million after two weeks on release.

Lee Joon-ik's "Sunset in My Hometown" debuted in third place. The Megabox release earned \$2.13 million between Wednesday and Sunday. Starring **Park Jung-min** ("Dongju: The Portrait of a Poet") and **Kim Go-eun** ("Canola"), "Sunset" revolves around an underground rapper in **Seoul** who is transported back to his suburban hometown against his will. (RTRS)