

John Carter

reviewed by [Steve A. Vineberg](#) in the [May 2, 2012](#) issue



There's no faster way for a movie to earn the disdain of critics than to rack up exorbitant costs and then fall on its face. And yes, *John Carter*, based on the Edgar Rice Burroughs fantasy *A Princess of Mars*, would be a better picture if it hadn't cost \$250 million, most of which is clearly visible in the overextended, dull Martian battle sequences.

Still, the movie isn't remotely as awful as it's said to be. It has visual imagination (especially in Nathan Crowley's production design) and a great deal of humor—hardly surprising given that the director is Andrew Stanton, who made the Pixar films *Finding Nemo* and *WALL-E*. And leading man Taylor Kitsch, as a Civil War vet who somehow winds up on Mars, certainly holds the camera, especially when he gets to demonstrate the anguished romantic ardor that distinguished his performance on the TV series *Friday Night Lights*.

At its best—when the green Tharks, with their extra set of arms and long, slender bodies and heads, register emotion and the faithful dog Woola, assigned as Carter's protector, laps at his face with its enormous blue tongue—the movie has a comic-

strip loopiness that's more fun than anything in *The Hunger Games*.