

'Chaos Walking:' New Tom Holland-starring film is a hotchpotch of dystopian ideas



CHENNAI: As dystopian dramas go, “Chaos Walking” makes a fair attempt at bringing a strange reality to the silver screen but is let down by heavy-handed story-telling and a weak script.



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Viewers are transported to a world populated exclusively by men — perhaps the only novel aspect of the film — as the women have all been killed. It is in this bizarre reality that director Doug Liman sets his adventure in 2257 AD.

Rather than the usual flying cars and slick tech that so often populates futuristic films, we see a return to primitive life with unpaved roads and men riding horseback. What is unique to this place is “noise” — one can hear others’ thoughts. A few have learnt to

control this, though not one young man, Todd Hewitt, played by Tom Holland.

Todd has lost both his parents, and he is closest to his pet poodle, Manchee. One morning as they walk through a forest they come across a young girl, Viola (Daisy Ridley). Todd is naturally startled to find a female. He discovers that her spaceship crash-landed and she was lucky to have survived. But the town's mayor, Prentiss (played with remarkable ease and conviction by Danish actor Mads Mikkelsen) wants Viola dead. Already heady at the sight of a pretty girl, Todd does everything in his power to try to stop this from happening.

Trying to categorize this film is not easy. Is it a fairytale about strange men in a stranger setting? Is it science fiction? The on-screen hotchpotch of ideas and themes is mirrored by the script which was originally drafted by Charlie Kaufman and then passed through many hands with a bloated budget of \$100 million. Adding to the chaos is the fact that it went through major reshoots by several directors with a young cast that aged over the three years it all took.

Even with a smattering of GI effects, "Chaos Walking" is hardly a compelling watch, and appears like a desperate effort to ape dystopian stories such as "Hunger Games." Besides Mikkelsen, whose subtle performance is used effectively to camouflage his seething anger, the others disappoint. Holland and Ridley have to grapple with weak writing and do little to flesh out their roles.
