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'Supernova' No Scorcher, Just Routine Sci-Fi Adventure

Movie Review

By KEVIN THOMAS
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“Supernova” isn’t so super, which is no doubt why MGM opened it Friday without early press previews. Despite the distinctive presences of James Spader, Angela Bassett, Robert Forster and Lou Diamond Phillips and a great high-tech look, the film is a relentlessly routine outer-space adventure further hampered by a load of technical jargon. The direction (credited to the pseudonymous Thomas Lee after Walter Hill requested that his name be taken off it) is brisk and firm, however, and the film may play OK with undemanding fans of the genre.

We’re 200 years into the future, and Forster’s A.J. Marley is the captain of the emergency medical rescue vessel Nightingale. Bassett’s Kaela Evers is the Nightingale’s non-sense—but very sleek and sexy—medical officer, and she’s wary of Marley’s new co-pilot, Nick Vanzant (Spader), who has just



STEPHEN VAUGHAN

James Spader and Angela Bassett face galactic terror in “Supernova.”

kicked a drug habit, having been addicted to the same future superdrug to which her ex-lover (Peter Facinelli) fell victim. Phillips, Robin Tunney and Wilson Cruz capably round out the Nightingale’s crew.

No sooner has this tension between Evers and Vanzant been established than the Nightingale receives an emergency distress signal from a rogue moon, site of a mining operation where some sort of disas-

ter has struck. After some special effect razzle-dazzle involving “dimension jumping,” a celestial storm and gravitational pull from a star about to implode, the Nightingale winds up short on fuel and with a new passenger, a smirky, edgy young man, Troy (Knox Grantham White), who’s the son of Bassett’s former lover and clearly the harbinger of big-time trouble ahead.

Unfortunately, all of what ensues

is pretty murky and dull. Writer David Campbell Wilson further hampers a hazy narrative line with minimal characterization. Even so, Spader and Bassett, equally assured and sharp, strike sparks and it would be fun to see them reteamed in more elevated circumstances.

● *MPAA rating: PG-13, for sci-fi action violence and sensuality/nudity. Times guidelines: violence and other elements standard for the genre.*

'Supernova'

James Spader..... Nick Vanzant
Angela Bassett..... Kaela Evers
Robert Forster..... A.J. Marley
Lou Diamond Phillips..... Yerzy Penalosa

An MGM presentation of a Screenland Pictures/Hammerhead production. Director Thomas Lee. Producers Ash R. Shah, Daniel Chuba, Jamie Dixon. Executive producer Ralph S. Singleton. Screenplay by David Campbell Wilson. Cinematographer Lloyd Ahern II. Editors Michael Schweitzer, Melissa Kent. Music David Williams. Costumes Bob Ringwood. Production designer Marek Dobrowolski. Special make-up effects designer Patrick Tatopoulos. Visual effects supervisor Mark Stetson. Art director Bruce Robert Hill. Set decorator Nancy Nye. Running time: 1 hour, 27 minutes.

In general release.