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Painkiller Jane

(Movie -- Sci Fi Channel, Sat. Dec. 10, 9 p.m.)

Filmed in Vancouver by NBC Universal Television Studio in association with [MGM Television Entertainment](#). Executive producers, John Harrison, Don Opper, Greg Gold; supervising producer, Matt Loze; producers, Harvey Frand, Jason Netter; director, Sanford Bookstaver; writers, Harrison, Opper, Gold.

Jane - Emmanuelle Vaugier
Colonel Watts - Richard Roundtree
Dr. Graham Knight - Tate Donovan
Nick Pierce - Eric Dane
Carla Browning - Venus Terzo
Mr. Grey - Zoran Vukelic
Blue - Walker Howard

By BRIAN LOWRY

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Looking awfully good in her U.S. Army special ops fatigues, Jane (Vaugier) leads an ill-fated mission into a Russian republic, where she's exposed to an unknown biological agent that transforms her into what amounts to a female version of the X-Men's Wolverine, minus the funky claws.

Whisked away to a secret medical installation, she's deemed a "valuable asset" by the military and placed under the supervision of Colonel Watts (Richard Roundtree) and a government shrink (Tate Donovan). That's because her immune system now operates at 20 times normal speed, allowing her to take a licking and keep on kicking.

Rapid healing isn't Jane's only power. Her reflexes and speed are also heightened (albeit in slow-motion, "Bionic Woman"-style), and she can go into a kind of wide-eyed trance that enables her to "see" beyond a mere mortal's field of vision.

Eventually, Jane gets tired of the lab rat routine and uses her powers to escape, pursuing answers about the villain responsible for changing her while hooking up with a handsome thief (Eric Dane) and his posse of misfits.

All told, there's too much musicvideo-style editing and too little action, with the only way-cool moment coming when Jane's skin expels a bullet and quickly repairs itself.

Nor does the script by John Harrison, Don Opper and Greg Gold allocate much time to sort out the emotional toll of Jane's predicament, creating a neither-fish-nor-fowl hybrid -- slightly malnourished both as an action vehicle and as a character-driven fantasy in the mode of CBS' short-lived "Now and Again."

The one fresh wrinkle here, then, is casting the sultry Vaugier, a veteran of various WB network series, as a female hero -- someone young boys can theoretically lust after while watching her kick butt. In this package, though, they'd be just as happy with a subscription to Maxim.

That isn't to say "Painkiller Jane" isn't worth resurrecting, since there are appealing elements buried within its sci-fi cocktail. Unlike the main character, however, it's simply beyond this movie's powers to bring them to the surface.

Camera, Stephen McNutt; production design, Richard Hudolin; editor, Andy Seklir; music, Brian Tyler; casting, Jason Wood, Stephanie Corsalini. 120 MIN. Variety is striving to present the most thorough review database.