

Movie Review

Written by {ga=mitch}

Sunday, May 27 2007 7:00 PM -

The third installment of the "Pirates" series hit the box office this Memorial Day weekend to big numbers, and like with any film of significance ... we dispatched the mega-talented Mitch Cyrus to the theaters to review it for us. Mitch loved the first Pirates, and gave the second film an "incomplete" rating when he reviewed it for us about a year ago. What did he think of the third one? He tells us in his latest movie review.



Last summer, I gave a rating of “Incomplete” on the second installment of this popular series, “Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man’s Chest”. My complaint was that it was an unexpected cliff-hanger, and although the movie was a dazzling example of a blockbuster action/adventure film, it left too many questions unanswered.

I can now amend that grade for last year to a solid “3 footballs”, as “At World’s End” wraps things up nicely, and supplies all the fun, thrills, chills, and spills as one can expect while still leaving open the potential for further escapades from Captain Jack Sparrow. Action rules the day, but they never forget the humor that was so key to the success of the first film. Overall, this is a visual feast that is intoxicating as rum punch without the worry of a hangover the next morning.

Picking up shortly after the conclusion of “Dead Man’s Chest”, Elizabeth Swann (Keira Knightley) and the resurrected Captain Barbossa (Geoffrey Rush) are

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trying to find a way to rescue Jack from the limbo of Davy Jones' Locker, where he was banished after his encounter with the Kraken at the end of the last movie. It's not that they are doing this out of the goodness of their hearts, as Jack is still a total rascal; but as he is one of the nine Pirate Lords, they need him to join in a Pirates' Council to decide how to deal with the evil East India Trading Company. Under command of the nefarious Lord Beckett, and using Davy Jones and his "Flying Dutchman" as chief enforcer, the world is no longer safe for pirates...or anyone else for that matter.

Swann, Barbossa, and Will Turner first encounter the mysterious Captain Sao Feng (Chow Yun-Fat) in Singapore, which leads to a few unexpected double-crosses, and an escape that takes them to Antarctica and then to the aforementioned end of the World. Jack has been on the other side for some time, and has gone crazy enough that he's now seeing copies of himself everywhere. That's about all he can see, as The Black Pearl has been stranded in the middle of a desert (the Bonneville salt flats was used for the location)...making sailing just a bit on the difficult side.

It's not exactly giving away anything to say that Jack eventually escapes...it would be a bit of a boring movie had he not. So once back on the Other Side and sailing the high seas, they have to make their way towards the meeting of the council, dodging Beckett, Davy Jones, and each others' treachery in the form of conflicting objectives. Will Turner is still trying to save his father, a slave on The Flying Dutchman. Jack still has that little thing hanging over his head regarding his debt to Jones. Barbossa is trying to reclaim the captainship of the Black Pearl, while Elizabeth has her conflicting feelings about her father, Will, Jack, and Admiral Norrington.

As you can tell, or have heard elsewhere, the plot does get very involved, but I for one do not think it gets to the point of confusion. There are a lot of characters in this film, and during the running time of two hours and forty-eight minutes, each actor has ample opportunity to show their talents. Geoffrey Rush chews up the most scenery, and I mean that in a good way. His swashbuckling "avast, ye matey" performance is far better than his turn in the first "Pirates" movie, as this

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time he's not being the total villain.

Keira Knightley shows in this film just how much she has grown as an actress. She has taken Elizabeth Swann from a plucky, but overwhelmed young woman of privilege and has turned her into a strong, resilient, and highly intelligent woman that is the equal of any man. She is completely believable being shown taking command of a ship or a crowded room of bickering pirates. She also can quickly shift from cracking a joke with the timing of a Lucille Ball, or melting your heart in her dealings with the love of her life, Will Turner. It also helps that Orlando Bloom has finally upped his game as an actor, and is no longer just a pretty block of talking wood. No, he's not the equal of the other actors he shares screen time with, but he does do an admirable job with the most thankless role in the film; the Straight Man opposite such extreme characters as Barbossa, Sao Feng, Davy Jones, and Captain Jack.

And it's still all about Captain Jack. Johnny Depp's magnificent portrayal is the glue that holds this franchise together, and each time he becomes more and more comfortable in the eye shadow. Despite the appearance of so many other good actors, Depp can still steal the show every time he is on screen. He dials down the swishing from the first movie, but turns up the inner rogue. His motivations and machinations are more focused now, and he's almost Bond-like in his ability to remain two steps ahead of everyone around him.

Although the first hour and a half can seem to drift from time to time, the last hour of the movie is jaw-dropping spectacular, as the Pirate Council makes their decisions and the final conflict between all the protagonists occur. The special effects are far superior to any seen before in this franchise, but it is still the actors that command your attention. One scene in particular stood out to me; a parlay between the "good" side and the bad side prior to the final battle. Captain Barbossa, Captain Sparrow, and Miss Swann stride defiantly down a sandbar towards their enemies, reminding every bit of the classic scene in "Kelly's Heroes" where Clint Eastwood, Donald Sutherland, and Telly Savalas strode towards a German tank. In this case, you had three ages of excellent actors in Rush, Depp, and Knightley setting the stage for an exhilarating, funny, and touching showdown between the Black Pearl and the Flying Dutchman.

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Gore Verbinski has done an excellent job in juggling all the various plots, backstabblings, and twists while still allowing his actors to shine despite so many special effect scenes. Even the small little bits are handled well, including Davy Jones' meeting with an old flame, and the long reported appearance of Keith Richards as the keeper of the Pirates' Code. Is it as good as the first movie? No, but it doesn't miss by much, and it is one of the best I have seen this year.

My Rating: Brian Sipe (3 1/2 Footballs)