

'Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales' provides proper closure to swashbuckling franchise

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Rating: «« out of 4

Running Time: 128 min.

It's important to know when to say when. Back in 2004, *Pirates of the Caribbean: Curse of the Black Pearl* (based on the Disney theme park ride), was far more entertaining and enjoyable a movie than it had any right to be. However, it was soon followed by increasingly flawed and unmemorable sequels. To be completely honest, I can barely remember the last film.

The latest sequel, *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales*, is still not a return to form. The witty banter and humorous pirate shenanigans remains less-than-razor-sharp and can't match the original's charm. Most of the new characters aren't particularly interesting. And there is very little in general that can be added to a pirate battle than what has already been captured in this series. However, despite its flaws, this is a handsomely mounted production featuring a few new wrinkles here and there. By the close, most of the plotlines continued throughout the series have been wrapped up. This is a good place to bring events to a close, allowing the participants a graceful exit.

As the film begins, Captain Jack Sparrow (Johnny Depp) has been having a rough go of it, with heist after heist failing to bring in coins and leaving his skeleton crew ready to walk away for good. On Sparrow's trail are several characters from varied backgrounds. Henry Turner (Brendan Thwaites) is the grown son of Will Turner (Orlando Bloom), and seeks Sparrow to

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help in his search for Poseidon’s Trident. Located somewhere at the bottom of the sea, Henry believes that the magical spear will free his father from a curse and reunite them. However, they must contend with the ghost of a Spanish Navy Captain named Salazar (Javier Bardem), who wants the item’s power to return him to his human form. Also involved in the hunt is Captain Hector Barbossa (Geoffrey Rush) and Carina Smyth (Kaya Scodelario), who is also on a quest to find her lost family.

As mentioned, these movies are all about action, adventure, humor and character interplay. Depp is given the usual routine with Sparrow, stumbling around drunk and cracking wise at the events occurring around and within the group. We’ve seen this all before, but at least he manages to sell the odd exaggerated expression here and there. When veterans like the actor and Rush are trading jabs, they land with far more efficiency than in some of the other moments.

However, a lot of the other dialogue and gags don’t hit the mark, often landing flatly. The new characters of Henry and Carina aren’t very sharply written, coming off as rather bland and forgettable. There isn’t a whole lot of onscreen chemistry between the pair either, making any sort of budding romance between them less-than-compelling. It’s too bad that there is little in the way of exciting material given to these main characters to help them stand out from the more familiar and distinctive supporting cast.

At least there are a couple of good visual gags when the dialogue lags. A spinning guillotine provide a solid running joke during one action scene. Also providing some amusement is an early heist-gone-wrong that results in an entire bank, walls and all, being pulled down a street. The finale, which involves the ocean opening and closing as the characters hurry down and up, is impressively photographed and looks great. This is an elaborate and expensive production, and every bit of money spent is right up there on display. The movie was previewed to the press in 3D and the depth also works; there’s a lot of ship parts and water spray flying off of the screen.

Just about every sequel made these days leaves some loose ends. Thankfully, this film ties most things up. Admittedly, there is a post-credits tag that suggests further adventures if box office grosses are strong enough. But after five films and revenue of nearly 4 billion dollars, I’d advise them to let it go and end things here. As it stands, *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales* feels a bit worn, old and ratty, but at least it will provide a proper and satisfying close to fans of the series. It’s not great, but no embarrassment either. Let’s hope Disney knows when to say when.

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