

Unraveling the suffocating wrap of stilted dialogue in 'The Mummy'

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

Running Time: 110 min.

Ever thought that the only problem with the classic Universal Monsters series was that they needed to team up and form an underground league to fight greater evil? I didn't think so, but that is the tack that has officially been taken. *The Mummy* is an attempt to start a new "Dark Universe" series of films that will eventually combine characters like Frankenstein's Monster, The Invisible Man and The Creature from the Black Lagoon. While I'll admit to being amused by the idea of these monsters coming together (personally, I think they should fight crime while tackling their various psychological issues), based on their first attempt the studio hasn't yet found the right approach.

The story begins with greedy soldier/treasure-hunter Nick Morton (Tom Cruise) and his pal Chris (Jake Johnson) accidentally uncovering the tomb of Egyptian princess Ahmanet (Sofia Boutella). They enter with archeologist Jenny Halsey (Annabelle Wallis) and get more than they bargained for. Ahmanet was mummified while alive as punishment for making a deal with the Devil for revenge against humanity. Now, she wants to complete a ritual that will bring the evil force back, and she needs Nick to supply the body. Stepping in to offer assistance to the group is a mysterious London-based organization headed by Dr. Henry Jekyll (Russell Crowe).

There are some entertaining moments. A sequence with an out of control plane featuring the characters being bounced around looks impressive as does a scene that involves swimming mummies. A couple of quips and reactions from Morton also raise a chuckle.

The movie's emphasis on action (with the occasional hints of creepiness thrown in) may

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impress youngsters unfamiliar with the characters.

However, those familiar with the creature features will note the many bits and pieces sewn together from other horror films. Obviously, *The Avengers* has inspired this new monster team-up universe, but the movie also borrows elements (from threatening bugs to a treasure hunting protagonist) from the 1999 remake as well. Even the mummies featured share characteristics more in common with vampires and fast-moving zombies.

Horror fans will also notice scenes that bear close similarity to pictures like *An American Werewolf in London* and *Lifeforce*, yet lacking the same kind of witty, crazed panache.

There are also some serious pacing issues that ultimately make it seem as though the sum is less than the whole of the parts. The editing feels muddled, choppy and at times clumsily executed. People jump around a lot from location to location, and while there’s sometimes a justification for it, on numerous occasions the strange cutting takes one out of the story. The movie is in a big rush, but it comes at the expense of story and character and feels exhausting at times.

Truthfully, there’s not a whole lot of chemistry between the stars, either. A lot of the interplay falls flat and that leaves viewers less involved with the primary relationship within the film. None of the cast members are particularly helped by some stiff and at time corny dialogue that includes (paraphrased) lines like, “Maybe it takes a monster to defeat a monster.” The entire enterprise is a bit too stiff and serious for its own good, needing a sharper sense of humor.

Would I want to see these characters team up and get involved in more adventures? Not really, and this is coming from a Universal Monsters fan. In the end, *The Mummy* has a few interesting moments but doesn’t quite come together, eventually unraveling thanks to a problematic screenplay. One can only hope that future chapters in the “Dark Universe” get a better handle on some of these classic characters and deliver a bigger punch.

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