

Sharks steal the show in '47 Meters Down'

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

Running Time: 89 minutes

There are plenty of fun things to do while vacationing in Mexico. Sunbathing on the beaches, strolling through quaint towns, swimming in the gorgeous waters, hopping into rickety old motorboat heading to the middle of nowhere, entering a rusty, dilapidated cage surrounded by hungry great white sharks more than 25 feet in length. Well, maybe not the last bit, but there's no *47 Meters Down* (or *Johannes Roberts' 47 Meters Down*, as the title credit bafflingly proclaims) without some serious lapses in judgment.

Lisa (Mandy Moore) and Kate (Claire Holt) are sisters who find themselves in this unlikely scenario. The equipment looks about ready to fall apart. Still, they continue. They watch their boat captain (Matthew Modine) illegally throwing chum into the waters to attract hungry fish. They enter the cage and are lowered into the waters. It isn't long before the cable breaks and the sisters plummet to the ocean floor. Panicked, they are forced to try to get into contact with those above and arrange a rescue. Preventing their escape are the very sharks they wanted to see up close.

I imagine none of this makes sense on a technical basis for divers. But as for the filmmaking, it's impressive to see so much of a film shot underwater. For much of the running time, the characters are submerged and attempting to take on one problem after another. Whether they're trying to free themselves from the cage or avoiding their pursuers, one imagines it must have been incredibly difficult to stage and choreograph. The computer animated sharks are well realized too, looking appropriately menacing and threatening. There are also a couple of decent jump scares that feature the fish appearing from the darkness and swimming past.

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But before you run out and buy your tickets, there are several other elements that don't work nearly as well. The leads are too simply drawn with next to no back story before they find themselves in the deep. Lisa is upset because of a recent break-up, fearing she was dumped because she's too reserved. By contrast, Kate is outgoing. Yep, and that's about it for character development. There isn't a lot of competitiveness or tension between the pair. At no point do you ever feel like one of the two would do anything selfish or in their own interests; it feels like a missed opportunity. It also doesn't leave much to resolve in the way of personal issues and the conversations that do take place (the pair even spend one sequence talking about guys) seem absurd given the circumstances.

Instead, most of the dialogue delivered is pure exposition. In some places it's necessary, but I honestly can't remember the last time I heard the phrase, "I'm so scared," uttered so frequently. This would seem the most immediate, obvious, natural and understandable response to these horrible events, leaving one to wonder why anyone needs to say it or repeat it so often.

The other big issue for the movie is that, for events to progress, characters are forced into making remarkably poor decisions. Essentially, it's repeated through radio channels that they need to stay where they are and await help. But there's no movie if they don't swim away from the cage to find assistance and cause themselves more problems in the process. However, because the characters aren't as well-written as they need to be, we don't sympathize as much as we should. Viewers may also be questioning the logic of other characters above and whether they might be doing more to assist the victims.

So, while there are few decent jolts here and the technical skills on display are quite good, viewers may have difficulty caring enough about the sisters to be truly invested in their plight. I imagine the filmmaker is quite impressed with what he accomplished (hence the bizarre title credit), but for me, the characters in *47 Meters Down* don't seem like much more than shark chum.

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