

'Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald' doesn't cast a strong spell

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 16 November 2018 09:19



Rating: «« out of «««««

Running Time: 134 minutes

It must be tricky keeping things fresh and lively in the “Wizarding World of Harry Potter.” The first *Fantastic Beasts* movie spin-off was a bit clunky but set things up well enough to encourage hope that things would carry on in a new and interesting direction.

As it turns out, *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald* is still overly interested in developing its character’s back stories and future plans, promising a grand showdown between the forces of good and evil...without actually delivering one.

Instead, the movie seems to be caught up in the minutiae of its fantasy world. Have you ever wanted to meet a character referenced in one of the *Harry Potter* titles? Are you intrigued and excited about hearing an incredibly detailed rundown of the Lestrangle family tree? Will you be shocked and titillated to hear about whom a mysterious character may be a relation of?

If your answer is a resounding yes, then you can raise my rating by half a star. However, any casual viewers will likely be left shrugging their shoulders.

The film begins with Newt Scamander (Eddie Redmayne) stuck in the U.K. due to a travel ban imposed on him by the Ministry of Magic.

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However, when the sinister Gellert Grindelwald (Johnny Depp) escapes from his confines and heads to Paris to gain followers who will help him conquer the world, Albus Dumbledore (Jude Law) asks for Newt’s assistance. Namely, to help locate Credence Barebone (Ezra Miller), a mysterious figure with uncertain motives whom all are searching for.

The hero has little interest in joining any side in battle but is excited by the opportunity of reuniting with Tina Goldstein (Katherine Waterston). It is soon and strangely revealed that she stopped speaking to Newt after reading a tabloid story that falsely reported him as being engaged.

The cast is fine and does their best with the exposition-heavy material, managing to sell a few jokes. There’s an amusing flashback to Hogwarts and a Dumbledore lesson in which Newt faces off against his greatest fear.

Some of the unusual creatures and visual effects are inventive and amusing. And the cute jewel-snatching Niffler is highlighted once again.

Depp always makes for an entertaining foe, but until the close he’s kept from interacting with all but one of the central characters. Of course, the final confrontation itself is also brief, existing to set up an eventual confrontation further down the line.

Perhaps it’s simply because we’ve all become so familiar with this universe, or the result of an extraneous amount of discussion and exposition, but things simply aren’t as exciting this time out.

And frankly, part of the problem with this chapter may lie with the Newt character. Having a character pulled along against his will and forced into responding to events around him can work, but his reactions here aren’t of much consequence. By the close, Niffler ends up having done more for the cause than Newt himself.

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This reviewer doesn't want to come across as too negative. It's a genial effort and, as mentioned, there are some fun moments and good individual scenes. However, this enterprise has an awkward time in its attempts to insert new characters and add intrigue, resulting in a movie that flounders and feels padded.

One hopes they can recover with the next chapter, but for the time being, *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald* doesn't cast as strong a spell as its numerous predecessors.

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