

‘Godzilla: King of the Monsters’ is overbaked and...well...undercooked

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 07 June 2019 06:26



Rating: «« out of «««««

Running Time: 131 minutes

This reviewer is something of a monster movie aficionado who grew up watching old creature features on the television screen before actively seeking them out on various video formats. As a fan, I can come across as somewhat picky about them. The previous giant lizard film from 2015 had its share of issues. However, the movie succeeded in presenting the titular being with a sense of gravitas, displaying it as a truly immense and awe-inspiring force of nature. *Godzilla: King of the Monsters*

does feature an onslaught of monsters fighting across the globe, but doesn't feel as exciting, impressive, or weighty.

Since the events of the first feature, Godzilla has vanished. However, work is still progressing at Monarch, an organization devoted to studying giant monsters. In fact, the story begins with Dr. Emma Russell (Vera Farmiga) creating a device that sends signals out to various creatures hidden beneath the earth. Almost immediately, she and her daughter Madison (Millie Bobby Brown) encounter eco-terrorist Jonah Alan (Charles Dance).

The nasty former colonel wants monsters to destroy civilization and return the world to a more natural state. After raising creatures like Ghidorah, Rodan and Godzilla, Emma's ex-husband Mark (Kyle Chandler) and the Monarch team try to stop the rampage.

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These admittedly goofy movies always have a lot to overcome. Particularly, human characters who come across as far less interesting than their beastly counterparts. Sadly, this film is no exception. The main thrust of the plot is the contentious relationship between Emma, Mark, and Madison who, while cities fall around them, are in the midst of a family drama over the loss of another family member.

While the actors do as well as they can, the screenplay is full of clunky lines and oversized emotional outbursts. It comes across as overbaked and, well, undercooked. There's little reason to care about the central personal drama in the movie.

The Monarch team doesn't fare any better. They find themselves standing behind computer screens in a control room, delivering clumsy exposition as they search for Emma and her daughter. Circumstances give the team an up close and personal view of the various creatures battling it out. Yet by the second or third confrontation, it doesn't feel as if the craft is in much peril.

This presents another problem, as the editing often cuts between the fights and information (along with jokes) being relayed that seem tonally off. Perhaps the makers were trying to poke fun at clichés in the series, but many zingers don't land and the familiar elements are never spun in a new or exciting way.

Sadly, the biggest problem may be with the big monsters themselves. Some of the elaborate fights include impressive moments, but most of the scraps have the appearance of two CGI creatures trading blows against a phony CGI backdrop. Some of the skirmishes take place in the Antarctic, as well as in oceans, not giving much of a sense of scale or weight to the conflicts. When the action moves to the bigger cities towards the final act, the smoking metropolises aren't as realistic looking or convincing as they should be (and the devastation doesn't carry the same impact as in the previous venture). The monster fights don't have the desired effect, feeling repetitive and ultimately tiring.

In the end, despite all the mayhem, neither the humans nor the monsters come across as particularly ingratiating, and as such there isn't much of a reason to care about what is happening onscreen. That's very unfortunate for a movie with such an iconic star. *Godzilla: King of the Monsters* offers a few amusing gags and moments of monster action that entertain. However, it's deeply flawed and appears especially geared to younger audiences (not unlike last year's

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). In the end, this lizard king deserves better.

(Note: For those interested, there is a post-credits scene that sets up another sequel. While I believe I know what was implied, those unfamiliar with Japanese monsters will likely be left scratching their heads.)

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