

'Wonder Woman 1984' improves on its predecessor

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

Running Time: 151 minutes

This film was released in theaters on Dec. 25 and is also be available for streaming on HBO Max.

Over the past few years, there have been dozens of movies based on comic books. Generally speaking, recent features from the DC Universe (that include superheroes like Superman, Batman, Aquaman and the Suicide Squad) have more often than not come up short in comparison with their Marvel counterparts. Still, one of the more well-received DC efforts was the 2017 film based on the Wonder Woman character. While it was an improvement on some of the previous movies, this reviewer still thought that it had its fair share of issues.

Thankfully, the new sequel *Wonder Woman 1984* corrects many of the first film's problems.

The story jumps forward in time from the World War I era to the 1980s, where Diana Prince aka Wonder Woman (Gal Gadot) has taken up a position as a senior anthropologist at the Smithsonian Museum. Still smarting from the loss of Steve Trevor (Chris Pine) six decades

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earlier, she keeps an emotional distance from those around her. When a set of ancient and unusual artifacts appears at the museum, Diana and timid archeologist Barbara Minerva (Kristen Wiig) take particular note of an unusual stone. It is soon revealed that grasping the rock can grant its user any wish they desire.

Suddenly, they are approached by oil magnate Max Lord (Pedro Pascal), who also takes a specific interest in the item. Before long, Lord has control of the dangerous artifact and several characters have their desires fulfilled. However, these wishes come with a dark and tumultuous twist.

The movie does have a lengthy set up as it introduces several new roles and places its protagonist in a completely new environment. Admittedly, while the first set of wishes procured from the stone don't initially have dramatic ramifications, the story does eventually get cooking and events become considerably more exciting in the second half of the film. And the extended first section does allow for the Minerva and Lord characters to make an impression. While they're not the deepest and most complex parts, performers Wiig and Pascal are very charismatic and make the most of any opportunity to add an extra depth wherever they can.

They're both insecure and flawed individuals, which helps make them relatable to a degree, even when they're out to do harm.

In fact, these two new figures are far more memorable than supporting characters detailed in the previous feature. The action scenes are impressively shot and edited, including a well-orchestrated and elaborate car chase and a lengthy fight in the halls of the White House in which all of the players take their knocks. One of this reviewer's beefs with the original was that the protagonist rarely seemed to be in grave danger. This sequel rectifies the problem by making the villains just as powerful as Wonder Woman.

And on an emotional level, Gadot is given more of an opportunity to show some range after being faced with a personal dilemma related to her wish.

Of course, there are a few clunky elements. There are also a lot of gags throughout that poke fun at the '80s. A couple of them are amusing, but a little really does go a long way. Additionally, the finale is a bit ungainly and the movie wraps things up too briskly (given what occurs during

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the climax, it’s remarkable how quickly everything goes back to normal).

However, this is a comic book movie with fantastic elements that can’t all be neatly wrapped up with perfect logic.

In the end, this sequel features a solid cast and memorable new characters. It also ups the emotional stakes and presents more elaborate action sequence thrills than the previous film did. So, in this reviewer’s eyes, that makes *Wonder Woman 1984* a superhero flick that delivers the goods and actually in many aspects is an improvement over its predecessor.

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