

'Dune: Part Two' doesn't falter at all

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Rating: 3.5 out of 4

Running Time: 167 minutes

This film from Warner Bros. will be playing exclusively at theaters starting Friday, March 1.

The 1965 Frank Herbert science-fiction novel *Dune* has been a tricky one to adapt. There was a notable attempt to develop a movie that famously fell apart. And when an official film finally made it to screens in 1984, the results were visually striking but condensed and confusing.

That's why many were pleasantly surprised by *Dune: Part 1* from director/co-writer Denis Villeneuve (*Prisoners*, *Sicario*, *Arrival*, *Blade Runner 2049*). While it only told the first half of the novel, it was spectacularly mounted and the story benefited from the added time allotment. Thankfully, *Dune: Part Two* is every bit as accomplished.

Picking up after the events of the first feature, the sinister Baron Vladimir Harkonnen (Stellan Skarsgård) has seemingly eliminated House Atreides and is now in complete control of the planet Arrakis, as well as its immeasurably valuable Melange or "spice" supply. Little do the villains know, the heir to the Atreides throne Paul (Timothée Chalamet) and his mother Lady Jessica (Rebecca Ferguson) have survived and are living with the indigenous desert people called Fremen.

Their leader Stilgar (Javier Bardem) believes Paul to be the prophesied one who will lead his people to freedom. But Paul is skeptical, as is Chani (Zendaya), who agrees to help teach him.

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In the meantime, Baron Harkonnen’s nephew Glossu Rabban (Dave Bautista) struggles to wipe out the Fremen and resume spice production. So, the even more sociopathic nephew Feyd-Rautha (Austin Butler) is summoned to finish the job.

As more conflict arises, the Emperor of the Known Universe (Christopher Walken) reveals his part in the proceedings.

Like the previous entry, this picture is a visual treat. There are incredible visuals as Harkonnen soldiers search the desert using jet-packs that float them up to the top of large rock formations. The effect is striking, as are the battle scenes in which their equipment is destroyed and they gracelessly crash to the ground.

The giant sandworms populating this fantastic planet were only seen briefly in the first film, but here the characters get up close and personal with them. Scenes of individuals riding the creatures are creatively shot, giving viewers point-of-view angles of the heroes reining the invertebrates as they plow over and through sand dunes.

The drama between the many characters also works effectively. The relationship between Chalamet and Zendaya is well-handled as they slowly grow close and begin confiding in one another. Bardem is a blast to watch as Stilgar and manages to add some very funny moments to an otherwise dark story. There are plenty of amusing moments as the character attempts to convince not only other Fremen that the foreigner is their savior, but Paul as well.

On the villainous side, it’s interesting to see Bautista play a big, ruthless thug slowly losing confidence as setback after setback occurs. Butler makes a fantastic impression in the role of Feyd-Rautha. His cold-blooded character is chilling and remarkably intimidating, making for a very tense final act.

There is also plenty of interesting political intrigue as motivations behind invasions and attacks are slowly revealed. Many individuals and groups have an angle on how to manipulate events to their own benefit. As such, the movie effectively shows how, even if Paul is the fabled liberator of Arrakis, victory will still come at a great cost to him and result in countless deaths. He doesn’t

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want to be the deity of the Fremen and the weight of the sacrifices that must be made to save the known universe from sinister forces are capably projected into the story.

Because this is a science-fiction opus with a multitude of characters and extended worlds, it can be a lot to take in. As mentioned, there is more political maneuvering involved than one might initially anticipate. Viewers should also note that this is a very faithful adaptation to a series of books. So, while the main drama is effectively resolved, some plot elements aren’t settled.

This reviewer would welcome one more movie to see everything come to a close, but even on its own this is a wonderful adaptation. While the source material may be familiar to many, the visuals are awe-inspiring, there are plenty of tense and exciting moments (thanks to the unique camerawork) and the interpersonal drama still draws viewers in. Despite the high stakes, Dune: Part Two doesn’t falter at all and the pair of titles stand together to deliver a fantastic science-fiction epic.

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