

'Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children' has its kinks, but provides some twisted fun

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 30 September 2016 07:02



Rating: ««« out of 4 stars

Running Time: 126 min.

Over the past couple of years, we've gotten more young-adult book adaptations than I can count. Beyond the massive success stories like *Harry Potter* and *The Hunger Games*, we've been fed a steady diet of titles ranging from *The Maze Runner*

,
*The 5
th*

Wave

, and

Percy Jackson

, to the probably-defunct

Divergent

series, all with highly varying results.

Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children is the latest, and it at least has some pedigree behind the camera. Director Tim Burton (*Edward Scissorhands*

,
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

, and

Frankenweenie

, among many others) takes the helm on this property. Based on the subject matter, he certainly

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would appear to be an appropriate choice.

Jacob Portman (Asa Butterfield) is an awkward teen who spends more time with his oddball, yarn-spinning grandfather (Terence Stamp) than with other kids his own age. The senior spins tales of grand adventures, fighting monsters and his friendships made at an orphanage run by Miss Peregrine (Eva Green).

After a tragic accident, the protagonist decides to visit Wales and investigate some of his grandfather's stories. Of course, Jacob soon discovers the tall tales may have had more than an element of truth.

This is a really unusual one.

Like many of these types of series, it takes a good while to set up the concept. There are characters living in the present, nasty monsters and phenomena known as time loops, in which others live indefinitely over the same 24 hours. Add in some antagonists and you've got a lot of different elements to establish.

It's all a bit slow-going and jumbled at the start. Admittedly, the necessity to get to the pay-off also leaves some plot holes. For example, there's a character who is described and briefly shown later in a strange (deceased) state; it's not entirely clear what is happening, and he is quickly brushed aside without explanation.

At least, when the extraordinarily powered and peculiar kids are allowed to do their thing, the movie jolts to life. When allowed to riff creatively, Burton provides some striking and creepy visual — from monsters, to a rampaging skeleton army — as well as creates a breathable room within an undersea barge. Even the sight of the children going out nightly in gas masks to watch their home be bombed is oddly compelling.

And frankly, I've never seen eyeballs tossed around in such a darkly humorous and decidedly offbeat manner.

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The kids are fascinating, and Burton does well to avoid the cuteness one might expect to see from them in this type of film. There's a sense of gloominess cast over the film and a few of the kids definitely act out in almost menacing ways. In fact, the residents are so bizarre and interesting that they're much more engaging than the lead character.

Mention must also be made of Samuel L. Jackson as Mr. Barron. He appears to be relishing his role and cracks some funny barbs along the way — so much so that one wishes he had more time onscreen.

So, once all of the headway is cleared, the final third, including an exaggerated, over-the-top confrontation in Blackpool, is a blast to watch.

This is a strange, strange movie. Yet despite several issues along the way, there's enough going on here that's different to at least set it apart from many of its ilk. *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* is very odd, and viewers will have to forgive a few missteps, but for a YA adaptation, it's still above average.

I certainly welcome this effort over many of the titles listed at the beginning of the review. If there's another installment and some of its kinks can be worked out, it may result in an enjoyably twisted little series.

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