

## 'The Batman' is bogged down by its run time

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun  
Friday, 11 March 2022 05:30

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Rating: <<<

out of <<<<<<

Running Time: 176 minutes

***This feature film opens exclusively in movie theaters March 4.***

With so many "Batman" movies over the past few years, it is beginning to get confusing to follow the iconic comic book character and his cinematic exploits. At least explaining the latest DC feature "The Batman" and its place among other superhero flicks is relatively simple.

This appears to be the first in a standalone series of films that have absolutely nothing to do with "Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice," "Justice League" or the 2019 spin-off, "Joker" (at least, as far as I can tell).

But like the last title mentioned in this review, the adaptation is set in a gloomier world. Gotham City is plagued with crime and a youthful Batman aka Bruce Wayne (Robert Pattinson) hunts criminals in the night, decked out in a bulletproof bat costume.

Despite politicians and other cops calling the figure a vigilante, police commissioner James

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Gordon (Jeffrey Wright) contacts Batman to ask for help in a series of brutal crimes. It seems that a serial killer is setting up elaborate death traps for the city's elite citizens, leaving riddles behind on the bodies.

Batman agrees to help and dives into the seedy underbelly of Gotham City, encountering mobsters Carmine Falcone (John Turturro) and Oswald Cobblepot aka The Penguin (Colin Farrell), as well as thief Selina Kyle aka Catwoman (Zoe Kravitz). Can the caped crusader identify the murderer and save some of the targets before they are wiped out?

Errrr, well, the case doesn't proceed as efficiently or as quickly as hoped for. In fact, the movie plays out over nearly three full hours.

That does allow for a few enjoyable and extended interviews and confrontations between the protagonist and various foes, even if it's clear that the intent is simply to establish one or two of them for future franchise movies. A few really seem to be relishing their roles... Farrell looks almost unrecognizable as Cobblepot and Turturro really stands out, landing a darkly humorous tone as slimy mobster Falcone.

However, other interactions with a few secondary characters are hard-boiled to a fault. It's one thing to be intense, but when the filmmakers try to present a grittier and more realistic backdrop to the proceedings, the growling and angry outbursts do feel over-the-top.

Additionally, that extended three-hour running time is a long period to meander through a straightforward mystery, especially when audiences will already have an idea of who the guilty party is based on the methods used. And the film's closing argument that a true hero must deliver hope to the masses instead of vengeance seems like an awfully obvious moral.

As for Pattinson, he is perfectly fine in the role of Batman. As mentioned previously, the movie is overly somber and he is asked to walk in torrential rain and brood into the camera for extended periods (some trimming of this might have cut a good 10 minutes out of the feature), but the actor manages the task.

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The constant downpours appear to be a part of a grander water motif. It may be a stylistic choice for visual impact or to suggest that Gotham City needs to be washed clean, but the constant heavy rain is so exaggerated that it almost becomes amusing (so much so that the villain's final scheme involving a flood almost seems like an unnecessary act).

On a positive note, there is some chemistry between the lead and the Selina Kyle character, as well as some well-choreographed action. The actor handles the physical elements effectively during his beat downs of thugs and crooks. There is also an impressive scene involving Batman being pursued by cops and leaping off a tall building, as well as an exciting car chase that causes chaos on a roadway.

In the end, "The Batman" does its best to update the character for the modern age and it succeeds in fits and starts. There are some good moments here and there, but the film is also bogged down by its ridiculous length and a supposed mystery that doesn't generate much in the way of suspense or surprises.

Comic book completists will probably enjoy enough of the movie to make it worthwhile, but casual moviegoers shouldn't feel any rush to hurry out to this adaptation.

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