

## ‘Creed III’ isn’t a knockout, but it does land a few solid punches

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

out of «««««

Running Time: 116 minutes

**This feature from United Artists Releasing is premiering at movie theaters March 3.**

In 1976, the boxing drama *Rocky* surprised audiences and became a surprise sensation, winning Academy Awards for Best Picture, Best Director and Best Editing. At the time, no one could have predicted how many additional films it would inspire.

After five sequels to the original title, a new spin-off series emerged. This one details the life of boxer Adonis Creed, son of the character who Rocky Balboa fought in the first two movies. Both *Creed* and *Creed II* were surprisingly effective and included some exciting boxing sequences to boot. The latest chapter, *Creed III*, has some plot holes and doesn't even feature Balboa, but the central plotline is unique enough to keep fans entertained.

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The film begins with Adonis Creed (Michael B. Jordan) retired after enjoying success as Heavyweight Champion. While living a life of luxury with wife Bianca Taylor (Tessa Thompson) and daughter Amara (Mila Davis-Kent), he keeps busy running the Delphi Academy, that school that has trained current title holder Felix Chavez (Jose Benavidez).

Unfortunately, Adonis’s well-being is tested with the unexpected arrival of a figure from his childhood. Having just been released from prison, Damian Anderson (Jonathan Majors) shows up asking that Adonis launch his career. The two share a secret about the arrest many years prior, and the lead ultimately feels obligated to help out.

Unfortunately, Anderson turns out to be a violent and underhanded pugilist. When Adonis realizes that he has been taken advantage of, he comes to the conclusion that he may have to reenter the ring.

The central concept is a good one and it’s interesting to see the confident Adonis deal with feelings of guilt and remorse as he works his way through a complicated past and personal history. Jordan has a lot of material to work with in this tale and his interactions with Majors are intriguing.

Majors also does well in the role of Anderson. Frustrated and angry over losing his career prospects and being left behind while serving time, he makes an impression. The character towers over the lead and low-angle shots of the boxer create an intimidating and foreboding presence. This is a figure who simply wants to cause pain and damage to his foes.

When the two leads share the screen together trading both barbs and blows, there is a great deal of suspense and everything is appropriately tense.

Sequences in the ring are also well photographed. Like every other boxing movie, the characters seemingly throw nothing but haymakers (while the more common jabs are used sparingly here), but the approach does create excitement and drama in the ring. Jordan, who has stepped behind the camera as director on this sequel, also attempts to add a little bit of creative flair during the climactic battle, employing some unique backdrops to the action.

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But while these aspects generally work, there are story issues. It is revealed that Adonis’s mother Mary-Anne Creed (Phylicia Rashad) knows far more about Anderson than she lets on. In fact, she withholds important information that would have changed the course of events. Her decision not to speak up earlier is a real stretch and difficult to believe.

Another subplot involving daughter Amara involves a bullying situation at school. There is conflict between Adonis and Bianca over how to handle the child’s attempts to stand up for herself, but nothing is resolved in a satisfying manner.

So, there are issues with the secondary story threads, as well as a reveal that is better ignored than pondered over. Yet the movie does present some thrills between the hero and antagonist, as well as well-shot and edited boxing scenes. The movie isn’t fantastic, but is better than many would expect given that it is the ninth title in an extended franchise. So, while *Creed III* isn’t necessarily a knockout, it does land a few solid punches.

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