

## 'Meg 2: The Trench' feels as if it was hastily thrown together

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun  
Friday, 18 August 2023 04:51

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Rating: <<<

out of <<<<<<

Running Time: 116 minutes

**This film from Warner Bros. Pictures is playing exclusively in theaters.**

*The Meg* arrived in cinemas in August of 2018 and was a surprise success at the box office. It split critics, but this reviewer admits to having enjoyed it. The film was slickly-produced and had its tongue firmly planted in its cheek, yet still managed to create a few memorable characters, as well as some enjoyably over-the-top action scenes.

*Meg 2: The Trench* is the follow-up, and while the movie attempts to do the very same thing, it doesn't work nearly as effectively. Despite the talent involved, it's a bizarre hodgepodge that jumps jarringly between multiple genres and lacks a unified tone.

Five years after the events of the first film, rescue diver Jonas Taylor (Jason Statham) has

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continued working with the Mana One underwater research facility. Well, that and serving as an environment activist, in addition to playing co-stepdad to 14-year-old Meiyang Zhang (Sophia Cai) alongside her uncle/company president Jiuming Zhang (Wu Jing).

When Jonas agrees to explore the bottom of the Mariana Trench with Jiuming and his crew, Meiyang decides to stow aboard. It isn't long before things go horribly wrong. The group discovers a secret and illegal mining operation at the bottom of the trench and are attacked by not only megalodon sharks, but other prehistoric beasts. They must survive both human and aquatic threats, identify the sinister masterminds within the Mana One operation and get back to the surface in one piece.

There's certainly a lot (perhaps too much) going on story-wise, as well as dealing with returning characters and several new ones who are added into the mix. Unfortunately, most of the newbies don't stand out and many of these figures appear to serve as little more than cannon fodder.

The movie also suffers from some truly creaky dialogue, including a character who states, "That was *too* close!" after narrowly avoiding death. Frankly, it's difficult to get a handle on whether or not the movie is using and poking fun at these clichés intentionally, because the lines aren't delivered with enough of a wink to make them funny.

And as mentioned, there's a strange juggling of genres including action, horror and comedy. It's not impossible to pull this task off (the original movie, as well as 1999's *Deep Blue Sea* balanced these elements effectively and still maintained a consistent tone), but here sections of the film seem firmly entrenched in one camp before veering jarringly to another.

Scenes of the divers heading to the lowest sections of the ocean, dealing with serious submersible problems and fighting to stay alive at a mining facility are played relatively straight. Yes, the odd humorous comment is made, but Jonas acts genuinely concerned about the safety of his stepdaughter. And naturally, the villains are deadly serious and glowering throughout.

Then there are scenes that delve into horror as the divers are pursued and eaten by creatures deep within the trench. A few jolts are effective, like an unsettling depiction of what happens when a person in a cracked submersible suit visor goes through the depressurization process.

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But at the same time, there's comedy up above as returning characters James "Mac" Mackreides (Cliff Curtis) and DJ (Page Kennedy) ward off armed mercenaries sent by the villain. They trade amusing quips, but don't seem as worried about their mortality. It all feels like an oddly stitched together patchwork that lacks drama, excitement or effective humor. And weirdly enough, the megalodons themselves end up disappearing for extended portions of the film.

That is, except for the finale. The movie goes utterly bonkers in its final act when all parties do battle at a vacation resort. These sequences play like a big-budget *Sharknado!* picture, featuring gags so utterly preposterous that this reviewer couldn't help but laugh (and wish that the entire film had adopted this approach).

Even the actors appear to be smiling as characters are mowed down all around them. It's another example of the movie jarringly switching tones, but in this case the change delivers laughs and wild visuals. The point-of-view shot from inside the mouth of a meg featuring swimmers being gobbled down and chomped up is hysterical.

There are a couple of outrageous moments and a crazy finale, but the screenplay feels like it was thrown together hastily in a boardroom meeting without any concern toward developing believable situations, genuine thrills or proper story arcs for its characters. In the end, *Meg 2: The Trench* is only for fans of B-movies, and even they would be wise to save some time by sneaking in and just enjoying the final 20 minutes.

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