

'Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice' wears viewers down with dourness and destruction

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 25 March 2016 03:51



Rating: <<< *out of 4 stars*

Running Time: 153 min.

The first *Man of Steel* movie left me pretty cold. As someone without a comic book background, it did little to engage me. The story lacked well-drawn characters and seemed to revel in nonsensical action and destruction. I came into *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* hoping for the best, or at least some tweaks and alterations to the formula that might develop the plot and characters.

It has been 18 months since the events of the previous film. While Metropolis has been rebuilt and many see Superman (Henry Cavill) as a hero, a minority is still reeling from the mass destruction. This includes Bruce Wayne/Batman (Ben Affleck), a superhero who takes issue with Supes' God-like powers. In the meantime, The Dark Knight attempts to find the leader of a criminal ring, while Superman's alter-ego Clark Kent and reporter/girlfriend Lois Lane (Amy Adams) also find themselves suspicious of an eccentric entrepreneur named Lex Luthor (Jesse Eisenberg).

Indeed, some interesting themes are introduced. In fact, it's almost as if the filmmakers heard the criticism leveled on the original and have strived to deal with some of the issues. Collateral damage, vigilantism, fear of an all-powerful individual, even discussions on whether or not a powerful mineral should be destroyed or turned into a devastating weapon. These ideas are brought up, but unfortunately not handled with any depth or real analysis. They are quickly forgotten (and some messages are later contradicted).

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The tone is self-important and dreary. Despite the best attempts of the talented cast members, this is a pretty glum exercise that details a downcast Superman and grimacing Batman glowering in the shadows. Heck, even butler Alfred (Jeremy Irons) is a heavy drinker. It gets a little tiring. And while it's revealed that someone wants these two superheroes to wipe one another out, beyond that there doesn't seem to be much of a point to it all. Sure, one assumes it would be bad to lose a hero but the plot involves no threat to the general public or overarching villainous scheme to take down the world. Based on the information given, there's no real reason to care about the outcome.

It all gets very ridiculous as it progresses. There are jarring attempts to get inside Batman's psyche via dream sequences. These are stylized in a manner similar to director Zach Snyder's *Sucker Punch* and are so bizarre that they feel completely out of place. By the second half, it's all just characters smashing into one another and more city blocks being destroyed by both the villains and heroes (boy, Metropolis and Gotham sure can't catch a break). A miscommunication that leads to potential bonding between the embattled superpowers actually comes across as unintentionally humorous as opposed to moving.

To be fair, there are some good ideas early on and the movie is impressive to look at. Some of the Batman scenes are interestingly handled and the dust-up between the two heroes is well edited. But it all gets out of hand and turns into a CGI-heavy mess very quickly. Ultimately, it isn't long before one feels as if they're watching a sequel that makes all the same mistakes of its predecessor. It's a dopey effort that mistakes its cloak of seriousness for depth. Ultimately its two and one half hour running time doesn't provide much more than growling and smashing cinder blocks to curry favor.

It seems *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* is well-polished, but it's also empty. There are some serious logic problems and the dourness of the proceedings just wears one down - in the end I couldn't take it seriously. The people of Metropolis and Gotham may love Superman and Batman, but to me they're beginning to look like gloomy, self-obsessed mass-murderers. With superheroes like these, who really needs supervillains?

Note to viewers: There was no post-credit scene at the screening I attended, so it looks like when the credits start to roll, you're fine heading straight out to the car.

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