

Blu-Ray Review: Fantastic Release For ‘Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on April 28, 2011 - 10:50am

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CHICAGO – It has all come to this. Well, almost this. It’s remarkable to think about how far the Harry Potter series has come since the film debut of the boy who lived. There have been incredible creative highs and only a few lows, mostly plateauing in the David Yates films (#5-7). If the films have been a tad inconsistent creatively, the Blu-ray releases by Warner Bros. have been anything but, delivering every single time. The recently-released edition for “Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1” does not break the pattern.



Blu-Ray Rating: **4.0/5.0**

The end of days are near as the battle between Voldemort (Ralph Fiennes) and Harry (Daniel Radcliffe) approaches. And approaches. And approaches. Knowing that the final book has been split into two movies and nearly five hours of running time allows for a lot of build-up and Yates handles it expertly, starting the film off on a very dark tone (it’s amazing how much the color palette of the films have changed over the years from the bright colors of the first few years to the near-blacks of this film) and essentially delivering an action movie. This is not a piece about kids learning about magic — it’s about battles, car crashes, betrayal, violence, and, yes, death. One of the most remarkable things about Rowling’s series and the films that brought them to the screen is how much the stories have matured along with the characters. This is intense, Shakespearian, world-saving stuff that was only hinted at earlier in the series.



Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1 was released on Blu-Ray and DVD on April 15, 2011
Photo credit: Warner Bros. Home Video

The dark tone of these final two movies requires a deft hand behind the camera and Yates has proven able to handle the material without making it too depressing or hard to follow. With ace screenwriter Steve Kloves, they treat their audience with the respect they deserve, knowing that not only have most of them read the books but know them by heart, and those who have only watched the films still don't need to be talked down to or treated with kid gloves. Yates proved to be a good fit for the series (he will, ultimately, have directed half of the films) not only because he didn't mess with the source too much but because he respected his audience. He recognized the importance of these films without making them too self-serious.



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Photo credit: Warner Bros. Home Video

And the audience and critics have followed. "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1" made \$295 million domestically, finishing behind only part 6 (which had the benefit of summer box office, little competition, and the expectation that comes with two years since the previous installment) and part 1. Critically, every single "Potter" film has placed "Fresh" on Rotten Tomatoes. Isn't that incredible? Has there been a series of SEVEN films that can make the same claim?

To be fair, "Deathly Hallows" is not my favorite "Potter" (that title would go to "Prisoner of Azkaban," followed by "Goblet of Fire"). It's a little slow as Rowling provided SO much plot to get through that it becomes almost numbing as you try to track characters, motivations, etc. Being mostly unfamiliar with the books (I read only the first) and with hundreds of films between "Potter" adventures, it can sometimes take some time to catch up. I'm sure I'm not alone in my plans to watch the entire series as a build-up to the final film on July 15th.

And I'll be watching them in glorious, beautiful HD with excellent special features. Warner Bros. has been continuously impressive with their Blu-ray releases for the "Potter" series and the new edition for "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1" is no exception.



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Photo credit: Warner Bros. Home Video

First, the specs — I loved the transfer for "Deathly Hallows." Many technicians would have over-polished the video like most kids movies but "Deathly Hallows" looks appropriately dark and sometimes dull without losing line detail. This is often a low-lit movie but the colors never blur or become muted. It's a fantastic transfer matched by a booming audio track that accompanies the film perfectly.

Now for the special features — With the series of "Ultimate Edition" versions of the films coming out over the last few years (#1-4 are available with #5-6 coming soon...and 7 likely next year) one might assume that some bonus material was being withheld for those releases but it hasn't significantly impacted what fans will find with "Deathly Hallows."

Fans will likely drool the most over the chance to see the opening scene of the final film, but the best special feature is "Maximum Movie Mode," a picture-in-picture feature that offers the opportunity to watch behind-the-scenes material as the film unfolds. I'm a sucker for this element of Blu-ray technology as I find there's no better way to learn about how a film was made than to see the final product playing alongside it. The WB releases for the "Harry Potter" films have not been mere fan service or financial opportunity. They have offered a window into how not just to make a movie, but how to make a phenomenon.

Special Features:

- o Maximum Movie Mode
- o The Seven Harrys
- o On the Green With Rupert, Tom, Oliver and James
- o Dan, Rupert and Emma's Running Competition
- o Additional Scenes
- o Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1: Behind the Soundtrack
- o Digital Copy
- o DVD Version

"Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1" stars Daniel Radcliffe, Rupert Grint, Emma Watson, Alan Rickman, David Thewliss, Robbie Coltrane, Brendan Gleeson, Helena Bonham Carter, Bill Nighy, Jason Isaacs, Julie Walters, and John Hurt. It was written by Steve Kloves and directed by David Yates. It is rated PG-13 and was released on DVD and Blu-ray on April 15th, 2011.



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