

Blu-ray Review: 'Snow White and the Huntsman' Dazzles the Eyes, Dulls the Mind

Submitted by [mattmovieman](#) [1] on September 19, 2012 - 9:13am

- [Blu-ray Review](#) [2]
- [Charlize Theron](#) [3]
- [Chris Hemsworth](#) [4]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [5]
- [Kristen Stewart](#) [6]
- [Matt Fagerholm](#) [7]
- [Paramount Home Entertainment](#) [8]
- [Rupert Sanders](#) [9]
- [Snow White and the Huntsman](#) [10]
- [Twilight](#) [11]
- [Theater, TV, DVD & Blu-Ray](#) [12]

CHICAGO – To say that Rupert Sanders's "Snow White and the Huntsman" is one of the year's best-looking films would be entirely accurate, but it's also one of the least involving. The more sumptuous the visuals became, the more infuriating I found the tedious script, which plods along from A to B to C without any real sense of urgency, before making a tired plea for a franchise. How depressing.

And yet, there's enough technique here worth admiring that it deserves not to drown in the swarm of media-fueled hysteria surrounding the widely publicized fling between director Rupert Sanders and star Kristen Stewart. On a purely technical level, the picture marks a fine feature debut for Sanders, who brings a medieval grit and mystical texture to his darkly entrancing visuals. This is the sort of film that Blu-ray players were made for, and some viewers may feel perfectly content in basking in the eye candy, but its a shame that the filmmakers didn't do more with the narrative itself.



Blu-ray Rating: **2.5/5.0**

By opening the film with a breathless extended prologue, the script allows no time for the audience to truly become engaged in the characters' plight. Stewart's immobile facial expressions do little to help matters, while Charlize Theron (as the evil Queen outfitted in Colleen Atwood's spectacular wardrobe) chomps on every last ounce of expensive scenery. Yet as the film progresses, Stewart reminds audiences why she became such a big star in the first place. As Snow White transforms into a warrior, the actress is fittingly ferocious and ends up commanding the screen just as much as her (admittedly fairer) co-star. This is a better showcase of Stewart's abilities than all four "Twilight" films combined, though if she returns for the inevitable "Huntsman 2," it may prove to be more than a little awkward. On one hand, the film allows Stewart to play an infinitely stronger female heroine (than Bella Swan) who refuses to be defined by her man. It's refreshing to see the film end without specifying whether she favors the compassionate Huntsman (Chris Hemsworth) over her adoring Prince William (Sam Claflin), but it ultimately led me to become fearful that the studio was setting up a Team Huntsman/Team William standoff in future sequels.



Snow White and the Huntsman was released on Blu-ray and DVD on September 11, 2012.

Photo credit: Paramount Home Entertainment

Though the film is blessedly devoid of the broad gags that plagued Tarsem's inexplicable "Mirror Mirror," one wishes that the characters in "Huntsman" were allowed to crack a smile without it routinely leading to the next tragedy. Sanders's background in commercials gave him a great deal of skill with visual effects, and there are several here worth admiring—such as the rapidly aging faces of the Queen's lifeless victims or the heads of big-name stars (such as Ian McShane and Nick Frost) grafted onto the bodies of the dwarfs. Yet there's also a sterility to the visuals that have more in common with flashy commercials than grand cinematic spectacles.

"Snow White and the Huntsman" is presented in 1080p High Definition (with a 2.35:1 aspect ratio), accompanied by English, French and Spanish audio tracks and comes quipped with a Blu-ray, DVD, UltraViolet and digital copy of the film. Among the special features are an extended version that runs a mere four minutes longer than the theatrical cut, Universal's Second Screen viewing option available only via the pocket BLU app and an audio commentary track in which Sanders is joined by co-editor Neil Smith and visual effects supervisor Cedric Nicholas-Troyan. Some of the most fascinating insights contained on the Blu-ray's solid array of featurettes come from Nicholas-Troyan, who discusses the creation of "Mirror Man," which slides across the floor like silk before rising into a solid form. In a nice touch, the figure's lack of a face allows the Queen to stare at a distorted reflection of herself. There's also some eye-opening footage of the low-budget reel made by Sanders to pitch his project to the studio (it's remarkable how similar it looks to the final product).

One of the concerns Theron had was her character's lack of complexity, and she pushed for more emphasis on the Queen's obsession with beauty instilled in her by an unfeeling mother (sadly, this plot detail is conveyed through unimaginative flashbacks). Watching Sanders and Stewart in the extras, it's difficult to believe that there was anything going on between them behind the scenes, though Stewart admits that she tends to "overthink everything," which may have been why she decided to go public with her subsequent apology. As for Sanders, he occasionally seems guilty of under-thinking things, such as when he claims that there's been no filmed version of "Snow White" since 1937. Apparently he forgot about 1955's "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," 1961's "Snow White and the Three Stooges," 1987's "Cannon Movie Tales: Snow White," 1997's "Snow White: A Tale of Terror," 2001's "Snow White: The Fairest of Them All," 2004's "7 Dwarves—Men Alone in the Wood," 2007's "Sydney White," or for that matter, 2012's "Mirror Mirror."

'Snow White and the Huntsman' is released by Paramount Home Entertainment and stars Kristen Stewart, Charlize Theron, Chris Hemsworth, Sam Claflin, Sam Spruell, Ian McShane, Bob Hoskins, Ray Winstone, Nick Frost, Eddie Marsan and Toby Jones. It was written by

Evan Daugherty, John Lee Hancock and Hossein Amini and directed by Rupert Sanders. It was released on September 11, 2012. It is rated PG-13.



[13]

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- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/snow-white-and-the-huntsman>
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