

Blu-ray Review: Tim Burton's 'Dark Shadows' Stages Toothless Vampire Satire

Submitted by [mattmovieman](#) [1] on October 2, 2012 - 8:32am

- [Blu-ray Review](#) [2]
- [Chloe Grace Moretz](#) [3]
- [Dark Shadows](#) [4]
- [Edward Scissorhands](#) [5]
- [Eva Green](#) [6]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [7]
- [Johnny Depp](#) [8]
- [Matt Fagerholm](#) [9]
- [Tim Burton](#) [10]
- [Warner Home Video](#) [11]
- [Theater, TV, DVD & Blu-Ray](#) [12]

CHICAGO – “Dark Shadows” flops on the screen like an undead fish out of water. It doesn’t have one ounce of the spontaneity or style that made the work of its director, Tim Burton, or its star, Johnny Depp, so irresistible during their hot streak of the '90s. The was back when Burton/Depp collaborations promised something more than peerless production values and morbid variations on familiar themes.

What made Burton’s early work so marvelous was the way in which it exposed the vulnerabilities and insecurities of its creator. “Edward Scissorhands” was an exhilarating portrait of teenage alienation, while “Ed Wood” explored the passionate yet absurd side of filmmaking. The latter film also centered on a friendship evocative of the young Burton’s own relationship with his aging idol, Vincent Price. These pictures were poignantly personal celebrations of individuality as much as they were visionary entertainments.



Blu-ray Rating: **2.0/5.0**

In “Dark Shadows,” the wholly unnecessary tongue-in-cheek rehash of the largely forgotten '60s-era soap opera, Depp plays his umpteenth misfit for Burton, with fangs substituting for scissors. What once felt fresh and exciting now feels tiresome and generic. Why do Burton and Depp feel compelled to revisit the exact same territory in picture upon picture? Perhaps their inflated paychecks now serve as their primary motivator. Perhaps Depp’s tremendous success with Captain Jack Sparrow and Burton’s recent box office hits have killed off their hunger to truly stretch themselves as artists. The fish-out-of-water gags that hit their mark so spectacularly in “Scissorhands” are just plain stale in “Shadows,” as the archaic bloodsucker, Barnabus Collins (Depp), finds himself resurrected in the fashionably hideous year of 1972. He kills a lot of people but only out of compulsion. He’s really a softie a heart, forever haunted by the lover who got away and the vengeful witch (Eva Green) who cursed him. It must be said that Green and Depp partake in the sort of acrobatic vampire sex scene that Twihards have undoubtedly been dreaming of, but there’s no spark beneath their clunky choreography.



Dark Shadows was released on Blu-ray and DVD on October 2, 2012.

Photo credit: Warner Home Video

It's not long before the befuddled Barnabus returns home to meet the rest of his dysfunctional family, who indulge in a multitude of withering eye rolls when confronted with his out-of-touch views regarding women and technology. Most perplexed of all is daughter Carolyn, played by Chloë Grace Moretz, who starred in the vastly superior vampire picture, "Let Me In." For much of the film, Moretz is the only element onscreen that appears to be truly alive, and the mixture of fascination and disgust that she projects in her scenes with Depp feel entirely genuine. [Spoiler Alert!] Alas, in the last act, Carolyn morphs into a werewolf and dryly utters the line, "Woof," as if attempting to top Michelle Pfeiffer's rousing delivery of "Meow" in "Batman Returns." Not only doesn't it come close, but it accentuates the desperation of a woefully unhip product by having the director pay homage to himself. Not even Helena Bonham Carter in a Bozo wig can enliven the proceedings, though Jackie Earle Haley manages to out-spook Depp simply by staring into the lens. Burton and Depp have done enough wonderful films that will continue to stand the test of time, but if they insist on continuing to deliver little more than reheated leftovers, I suggest that they retire instead. Better to make no films at all than one that's dead on arrival.

"Dark Shadows" is presented in 1080p High Definition (with a 1.85:1 aspect ratio), accompanied by English, French and Spanish audio tracks, and comes equipped with Blu-ray, DVD and UltraViolet versions of the film. Extras includes a brief array of humdrum deleted scenes and nine glib focus point featurettes that can be viewed during the film via Maximum Movie Mode. Though Depp reveals that he based his portrayal largely on the work of Jonathan Frid (who played the original Barnabus), the disc includes no footage of the TV show nor a featurette on Frid himself, who made a cameo in Burton's film not long before his death.

'Dark Shadows' is released by Warner Home Video and stars Johnny Depp, Eva Green, Michelle Pfeiffer, Chloë Grace Moretz, Gulliver McGrath, Helena Bonham Carter, Jackie Earle Haley, Bella Heathcote, Jonny Lee Miller and Alice Cooper. It was written by Seth Grahame-Smith and directed by Tim Burton. It was released on October 2, 2012. It is rated PG-13.

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- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/dark-shadows>
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