

Film Review: Entertaining, Complex ‘The Hunger Games: Catching Fire’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on November 19, 2013 - 11:57am

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CHICAGO – Second acts to incredibly popular and entertaining mainstream fare can be a tough prospect. For every “The Dark Knight,” there are too many films like “The Twilight Saga: New Moon” – works that essentially just repeat what audiences fell in love with instead of trying to expand on the world of their predecessors. And so “The Hunger Games: Catching Fire” hits theaters this week with an amazing amount of anticipation but a good degree of trepidation as well. Can new director Francis Lawrence not just offer a repeat but a worthy follow-up? Will the legions of fans of Katniss and Peeta be satisfied? Absolutely.



Rating: **3.5/5.0**

“Catching Fire” is a thematically complex and artistically refined piece of work. I must admit to not being familiar with the source material and so much of my response to the quality of “Catching Fire” can probably be attributed to how impressed I am with the way that Suzanne Collins took her initial concept and really developed it in her follow-up. The narrative of “Catching Fire,” adapted by Simon Beaufoy and Michael deBruyn, is fascinating in the way it dissects propaganda, governmental control, and the seeds of rebellion. And it’s marvelously entertaining as well, even if the producers of this one could have trimmed some of the massive running time (146 minutes) down to make it even tighter. In terms of pure story, “Catching Fire” is what a sequel should be – a development of themes from the first movie instead of mere repetition.



[Read Brian Tallerico's full review of “The Hunger Games: Catching Fire” in our reviews section. \[21\]](#)

Katniss Everdeen (Jennifer Lawrence) and Peeta Mellark (Josh Hutcherson) are beloved icons, as are all victors of The Hunger Games. They have a special story though in that the world believes them to be victorious through the power of their love. They were willing to sacrifice themselves and it is their love that made them dual winners of the games. However, they’re not actually in love. Well, at least she’s not, as the film opens with her kissing beau Gale (Liam Hemsworth). It wouldn’t be a hit Young Adult novel without a love triangle.

The nefarious President Snow (Donald Sutherland) recognizes the PR nightmare of a Katniss not betrothed to Peeta. If the increasingly rebellious people of his country see Katniss as an icon of revolution in the way she essentially broke the rules of her time in the Games then she could lead them to a coup. Snow tries to spin the image of Katniss & Peeta, sending them on a victory tour, forcing them to fake their love for the cameras and trying to turn Katniss from an icon of the little people to one who has forgotten where she came from. Of course, it doesn’t work and it appears drastic action will be required to stop anarchy in Snow’s districts.



[Continue reading for Brian Tallerico's full “The Hunger Games: Catching Fire” review. \[21\]](#)

“The Hunger Games: Catching Fire” stars Jennifer Lawrence, Josh Hutcherson, Liam Hemsworth, Woody Harrelson, Donald Sutherland,

Elizabeth Banks, Lenny Kravitz, Sam Claflin, Jena Malone, Jeffrey Wright, Amanda Plummer, and Philip Seymour Hoffman. It was adapted from the book by Suzanne Collins by Simon Beaufoy and Michael deBruyn and directed by Francis Lawrence. It opens on Friday, November 22, 2013 and is rated PG-13.



The Hunger Games: Catching Fire

Photo credit: Lionsgate

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