

Film Review: Heroics of ‘Dunkirk’ Portrayed Ardently & Humanely

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on July 19, 2017 - 8:35am

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CHICAGO – War is hell, even in “The Good War.” The early days of World War II were a desperate time for the British, and the events of “Dunkirk” were largely about loss, yet mostly about inspiration. Director Christopher Nolan gives his film a grand cinematic treatment, evoking an era that has mostly faded away.



Rating: **4.5/5.0**

The film is presented like a symphony – in fact, there is an epic soundtrack pervasively scored through the entire movie (by James Newton Howard). The situation on that French beach in 1940 couldn’t have been worse for the early efforts of the BEF (British Expeditionary Force) versus the German army during the Battle of France. Their armies were trapped, with no way of getting to safe harbor, achingly close (40-80 nautical miles) to home across the English Channel. Enter the “small ships of Dunkirk,” a loose collection of pleasure crafts and fishing boats rounded up for the evacuation effort. Director Nolan provides several points of view in this event – from the air, sea and ground – particularly through one British private who goes through hell and back to survive. Although it could be characterized as too much hyperbole, the grand scale of the situation, combined with the humanity of the evacuees, combined to make this an operatic and rich war-is-hell film.

The 1940 Battle of France is going poorly for the early World War II Allies... the British, French and Belgium forces. The armies get surrounded near a French beachhead named Dunkirk, across the English Channel from Britain. German bombers have the nearly 400,000 men pinned down, including a hapless private named Tommy (Fionn Whitehead) who can’t seem to find safety.

Meanwhile, the few battleships that are in the “mole” (Dunkirk harbor) are being smashed to smithereens, despite the efforts of air gunners Farrier (Tom Hardy) and Collins (Jack Lowden). It’s up to the “little ships of Dunkirk” to evacuate the mass armies, and one of those pleasure crafts is piloted by Mr. Dawson (Mark Rylance), his teen son Peter (Tom-Glynn Carney) and his friend George (Barry Keoghan). Their “finest hour” is about to begin.

“Dunkirk” opens everywhere on July 21st. See local listings for theaters and show times of special 70mm presentations. Featuring Tom Hardy, Kenneth Branagh, Jack Lowden, Mark Rylance, Fionn Whitehead, Tom-Glynn Carney, Barry Keoghan, James D’Arcy and Harry Styles. Screenplay and directed by Christopher Nolan. Rated “PG-13”



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The Beach is a Battleground in Christopher Nolan’s ‘Dunkirk’
Photo credit: Warner Bros.

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