

New Director Finds Teeth in 'The Twilight Saga: Eclipse'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on June 30, 2010 - 2:21pm

- [Ashley Greene](#) [2]
- [Billy Burke](#) [3]
- [Brian Tallerico](#) [4]
- [Bryce Dallas Howard](#) [5]
- [David Slade](#) [6]
- [Elisabeth Reaser](#) [7]
- [Kellan Lutz](#) [8]
- [Kristen Stewart](#) [9]
- [Movie Review](#) [10]
- [Nikki Reed](#) [11]
- [Peter Facinelli](#) [12]
- [Robert Pattinson](#) [13]
- [Taylor Lautner](#) [14]
- [The Twilight Saga: Eclipse](#) [15]
- [Twilight](#) [16]
- [Xavier Samuel](#) [17]



Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Easily the best entry in the franchise, “The Twilight Saga: Eclipse,” finally allows those of us unfamiliar with the books by Stephenie Meyer to understand why the saga of the vampire, the wolf, and the sullen girl in the middle has become an international phenomenon. With actual performances from Robert Pattinson and Kristen Stewart instead of mere teen melodrama and tight, blockbuster pacing by director David Slade, “Eclipse” stands ashen head and furry shoulders above “Twilight” and “The Twilight Saga: New Moon.”

Don't get me wrong. “The Twilight Saga: Eclipse” is too flawed to completely convert those of you turned off by the rising fame of Robert Pattinson, Taylor Lautner, and Kristen Stewart and there's nothing I can say to the people who own anything that says “Team Edward” or “Team Jacob” that would convince them that these movies still aren't as good as they should be. However, for the former, it should make the news that “The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn” has been split into two feature films easier to swallow and I think the latter know that the “Twilight” movies aren't quite perfect but love them despite their flaws.



Robert Pattinson and Kristen Stewart star in the Twilight Saga: Eclipse.

Photo credit: Kimberley French/Summit

With no recap for ticket buyers who might stumble into the franchise in the third film, “The Twilight Saga: Eclipse” dives right into its melodramatic tale with Bella Swan (Stewart) and Edward Cullen (Pattinson) discussing their future in a sun-drenched field. She’s still trying to convince her bloodsucking boy toy to turn her into a vampire, which he refuses to do until they get married. Not only is Edward withholding his fangs but we learn that Bella is still a virgin because her pale beau wants to wait on that aspect of their relationship as well. In Meyer’s conservative world, a little heavy petting is equal to being turned into the undead.

On the other side of the most supernatural town in the Pacific Northwest, Jacob (Lautner) is brooding over his lost love and refusing to return her phone calls and requests to still be friends. Bella’s dad (Billy Burke) pressures her into spending some more time with the seemingly better-for-her Jacob and it’s revealed that Jacob not only still loves her but is convinced that she will one day realize her love for him as well.

Into this Shakespearian love triangle drops a new figure — a mysterious redhead named Victoria (an effective Bryce Dallas Howard) who has a score to settle with the fashionable Cullen clan. She’s behind a series of killings in Seattle led by her sire Riley (Xavier Samuel). He has helped create an army of deadly newborns and it soon becomes clear that their target is Bella. The vampires and the werewolves must band together in order to protect the girl and stop the bloodshed. Despite their hatred for each other, Edward and Jacob must work side-by-side to save Bella’s life. Why she’s worth saving is never really clarified.



Taylor Lautner, Robert Pattinson and Kristen Stewart star in the Twilight Saga: Eclipse.

Photo credit: Kimberley French/Summit

The flaws of “Eclipse” are not too dissimilar from those of “The Twilight Saga: New Moon.” There’s still an overdose of self-seriousness to Melissa Rosenberg’s overheated dialogue that sounds not unlike a thirteen-year-old girl’s diary but Slade and his team have wisely tightened the pace and removed a good amount of the emotional brooding. Significantly less bloated, “Eclipse” moves at a much better pace than “New Moon” and most of the cast seems reinvigorated by actually having an urgency to their dramatic arcs.

Most notably, Robert Pattinson and Kristen Stewart actually have believable chemistry (perhaps their real-life romance had finally started to influence their on-screen one by the time this film shot) and Robert deftly handles his character’s complex fear of losing Bella. Edward is in a situation where he’s not quite sure what he even wants in that “winning” could mean turning his love into a creature like him. He could lose her to an enemy, to Jacob, or she’ll end up one of the undead. The supporting cast — most notably Howard, Samuel, Burke, and Dakota Fanning — are still better but Pattinson and Stewart finally sell the emotional core of the “Twilight” saga in a way that the first two films did not.

Sorry “Team Jacob,” but Taylor Lautner gets no such praise. He’s still unconvincing, letting his abs do most of the acting for him. His biggest problem is that he never looks like he’s actually in the moment. Great actors look like they’re actually listening to their co-star instead of merely waiting for their cue. Lautner always looks like he’s waiting to be cued.

Despite a few notable flaws, “The Twilight Saga: Eclipse” is without question the best of the series to date; a film that has actual atmosphere and pace instead of just romantic teen obsession. David Slade realized the importance of rising dramatic urgency and has crafted an action film that works on its own terms while also deeply satisfying fans of the franchise. After a summer filled with shockingly disappointing films masquerading as crowd-pleasing blockbusters, it’s shocking to see a sequel that’s this close to being exactly what fans want it to be.

‘The Twilight Saga: Eclipse’ stars Kristen Stewart, Robert Pattinson, Taylor Lautner, Billy Burke, Bryce Dallas Howard, Xavier Samuel, Peter Facinelli, Elisabeth Reaser, Kellan Lutz, Nikki Reed, Ashley Greene, and Dakota Fanning. It was written by Melissa Rosenberg from the book

by Stephenie Meyer and directed by David Slade. It opens on June 30th, 2010. It is rated PG-13.



[18]

By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [19]
Content Director
HollywoodChicago.com
brian@hollywoodchicago.com [18]

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