

‘The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader’ Not Worth the Trip

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on December 10, 2010 - 9:40am

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Rating: **2.0/5.0**

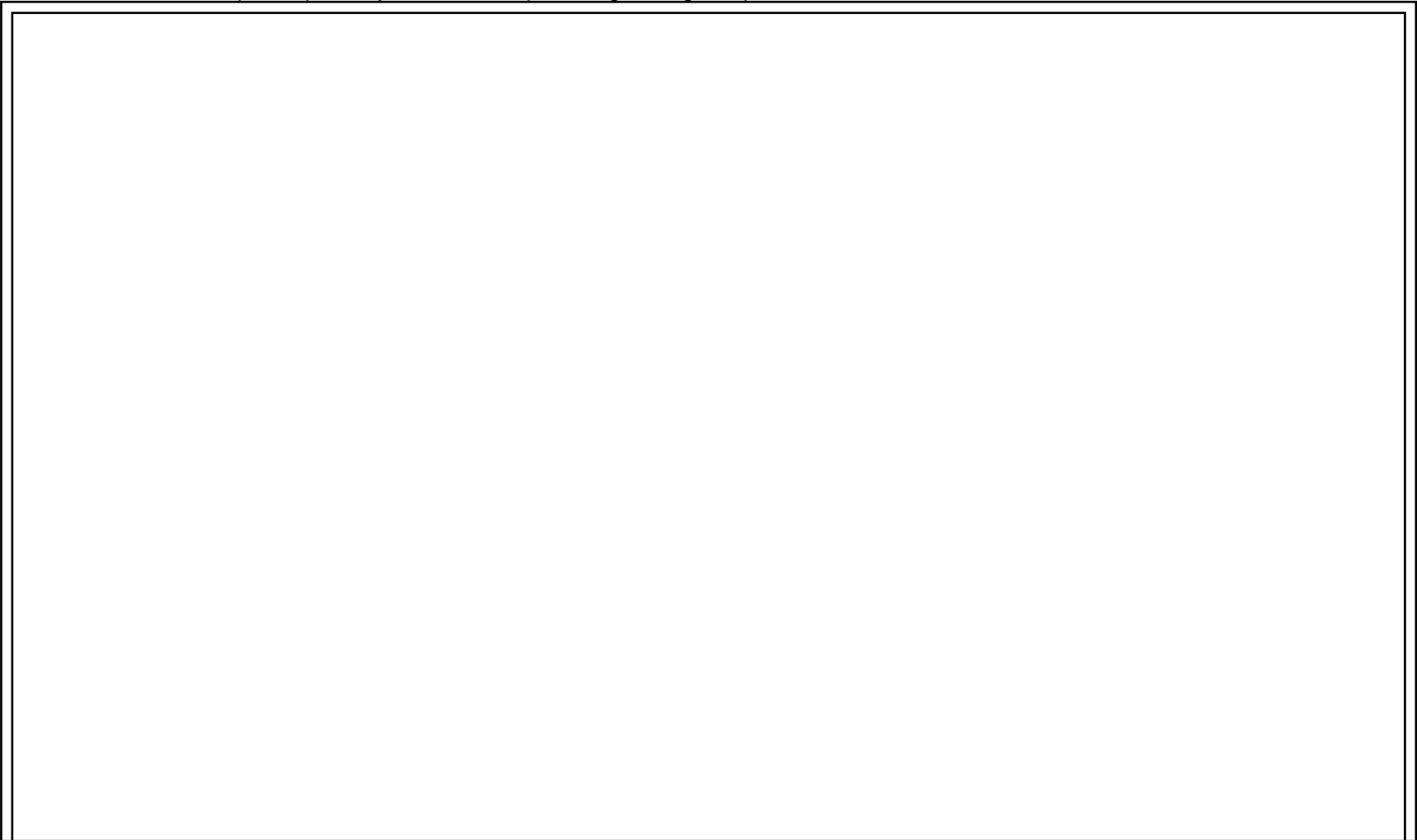
CHICAGO – The children’s fantasy drama is a hot commodity in the current age of computer generated images. Many favorite books once thought too complex to be filmed are now seeing new life in film series, including “The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader” by C.S. Lewis, first published in 1952.

This is not to say that there is no value to these stories being rendered to film. The lovers of any book series, be it Harry Potter or The Chronicles of Narnia, would anticipate and understand each step through the movie series, simple because they know the characters and the back story. The challenge for any series director comes from an audience member who has never read the books and are viewing the films separately for the first time. With a cursory knowledge of the characters in the series, like Harry Potter, can the film stand up on its own? The latest Chronicles of Narnia movie, The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, does not.

Edmund (Skandar Keynes), Lucy (Georgie Henley) and their obnoxious cousin Eustace (Will Poulter) are forced together just as World War 2 is breaking out across England. Edmund and Lucy are staying at Eustace’s house, and the spoiled cousin is constantly berating them for invading his territory. Lucy notices a painting in one of the bedrooms, that reminds her of previous journeys to the magical land of Narnia.

As all three fellow housemates stare at the strange painting, it begins to come to life, flooding the room with water until Edmund, Lucy and Eustace are swept away into an ocean, and emerge on the “other side” in Narnia, right below the ship called The Dawn Treader. Old allies King Caspian (Ben Barnes) and the heroic mouse Reepicheep (voice of Simon Pegg) are on board, and quickly enlist the three travelers to help them in their assignment.

A mysterious mist has been swallowing Narnia’s countrymen and kidnapping them to a far away island. Capian's mission is to find seven lords, who his evil Uncle Miraz had banished after Caspian took up the throne. If the shipmates can find the lords and arrange a pattern of their seven swords, then perhaps they can develop enough magical powers to defeat their enemies.





Ship of Dreams: Lucy (Georgie Henley) is at Home in 'The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader'
Photo credit: © Twentieth Century Fox Film Corp. & Walden Media, LLC

Like this summer's "The Last Airbender," the complex story has to be stopped every so often for one of the characters to explain what is going on, which drags a movie down like a sinking ship. The interpretation of author C.S. Lewis and his fantastical plots most likely read like butter, but in cinematic terms there is simply too much story in trying to understand the retelling.

The narrative itself is a standard good versus evil plot that is a foregone conclusion the minute the kids are plucked from the drink. The Dawn Treader is one cool ship, only an Ebenezer Scrooge would imagine it raided by pirates and pillaged or defeated. The only sense that something might go awry is obnoxious cousin Eustace, played with spoiled brat bravado by Will Poulter. He wrestles with the concept of having fell into the painting – at least someone is acknowledging the weirdness – and makes life difficult for the mousie Reepicheep, endangering the journey so much that later he is changed into a dragon. Yes, that's right, a dragon.

The performances seemed to be wrestling matches with the special effects, hunky Ben Barnes as King Caspian having the most trouble. This was an actor picked for his looks, not his ability to express his soul to the orange on a stick filling in for the dragon (or whatever they used to represent the effect on set). The kids actors have a bland sameness in their heroism, the one saving grace is that Lucy seems to be going through adolescence, which makes a passage through a watery tunnel ripe with Freudian implications. Those are the straws to be grasped when trying to understand seven lords with seven swords.

The Voyage of the Dawn Treader is in 3D, which is fast becoming one of the most annoying technological advances in moviedom. It's easy to tell that this film was retrofitted into the third dimensional realm, because the whole palette of the cinematography becomes murky as if it were shot all at night, causing several instances of removing the glasses to take a break from the blurring action. The cynicism of marketing action that pairs 3D with a family film in hopes of luring a bunch of extra patrons during the holiday is sadly, again, Scrooge-like.



Illuminating Text: King Caspian (Ben Barnes), Edmund (Skandar Keynes) and Lucy Look it Up in 'The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader'

Photo credit: © Twentieth Century Fox Film Corp. & Walden Media, LLC

The director Michael Apted seems to deserve a better fate. Adept at both documentary (he has followed a group of people through their lives in the "Up" series...49 Up, etc.) and narrative ("Coal Miner's Daughter") he is over matched by the project management of story and special effect. He is slated for the next chapter in the series, subtitled "The Silver Chair." That title predicts where Apted will have to retire to after wrestling with the series.

One piece of advice I received before the film started, was that the Lion named Asian (voiced by Liam Neeson) is the "King of Kings," and represents Jesus. I paid strict attention to the voice on reverb throughout the big cat's appearances. I sought and expected divinity, but all that was received were common platitudes. What an apt symbol for this entire film.

"The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader" opens everywhere on December 10th in Digital 3D and "Real D" 3D. Check theaters for formats. Georgie Henley, Skandar Keynes, Ben Barnes. Will Poulter, Simon Pegg and Liam Neeson Screenplay by Christopher Marcus, Stephen McFeely and Michael Petroni, directed by Michael Apted. Rated "PG"



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