

## Johnny Depp in Entertaining ‘Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on May 19, 2011 - 2:24pm

- [Geoffrey Rush](#) [2]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [3]
- [Ian McShane](#) [4]
- [Johnny Depp](#) [5]
- [Keith Richards](#) [6]
- [Kevin McNally](#) [7]
- [Movie Review](#) [8]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [9]
- [Penelope Cruz](#) [10]
- [Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides](#) [11]
- [Rob Marshall](#) [12]
- [Walt Disney Picture](#) [13]



Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – It’s easy to remember that the Pirates of the Caribbean movie series is on its fourth formulaic film, but harder to remember that it’s based on a freaking amusement park ride! Director Rob Marshall livens it up with “Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides.”

The latest romp goes back to its roots somewhat, relying more on an intriguing narrative notion – the search for the Fountain of Youth – and less on the gaudy and distracting special effects for the sake of effects. Johnny Depp’s Jack Sparrow character seems more relaxed and focused, and adding Penélope Cruz as a romantic rival adds a spark that fills the void of the endless pirate routine and wink-at-the-camera jokes.

Captain Jack Sparrow (Depp) is captured by the 18th century British authority, and forced by the crown to embark on a journey based on a map in his possession...the route to the Fountain of Youth. It seems that Spain is in on the chase, and the Brits want the magic waters all for their own. The monarchy has even recruited Sparrow’s pirate rival, Barbossa (Geoffrey Rush) to captain the ship, Sparrow to be his guide. Naturally, Captain Jack makes his escape.

Forced to go underground, Sparrow hears of a rogue ship about to get into the Fountain race. It turns out to be piloted by an old lover, Angelica (Penélope Cruz), and captained by the notorious Blackbeard (Ian McShane). She forces Jack to come along and provides him with key information on how the Fountain of Youth works. It seems that they must find two chalices that once belonged to Spanish explorer Ponce De León, fill them at the Fountain and add the tear of a Mermaid to one of them.



Johnny Depp (Jack Sparrow) and Penélope Cruz (Angelica) in ‘Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides’  
Photo credit: Peter Mountain for © Disney Enterprises



This leads the three diverging missions to Whitecap Bay, where the Mermaids are there for the capture, but is only Syrena (Astrid Bergés-Frisbey) that is apprehended, by the missionary Philip Swift (Sam Claflin). Their pure ardor for each other will activate the key element necessary to obtain the magic tear (she ain't crying for nothing), and the final confrontation of all interests will occur directly at the youth revitalizing destination.

In this latest Pirates film, director Rob Marshall puts the series back in the hands of Depp as Jack Sparrow, and he is re-energized pursuing the empathetic goal of eternal life. The mystery of the Fountain of Youth, rooted in real historical legend, is a good fit for the pirate mythology. And the addition of authentic characters in the British and Spanish realms is a nice touch, for it gives the bombastic rock-and-roll pirate Jack Sparrow a way to stick it to the man. His first confrontation with King George II, for example, exposes the monarch as a withering coward.

The supporting cast comes along for the ride, and all are having fun. Geoffrey Rush, in the prime of his long career, relishes the transition from pirate to "privateer" (which is the title that the British "authority" has lain upon him). It is a ruse from the beginning, for the greatest privilege we see Barbossa have is luxurious meals, he goes along for the ride because the food and accommodations are satisfying. Compare that with the "privateers" of today.

Penélope Cruz is virtuously cast as the love interest, able to match Jack Sparrow sword to sword. Her back story of being corrupted by Jack at a nunnery ("I thought it was a brothel") is a telling revenge factor. Her secrets also fuel the mystery of the youth chase and the partnership tension with Jack is a reminder on how important the "femme fatale" can be in adventure stories.

Speaking of femmes, the mermaid angle is wisely psycho-sexual. Two actresses who play the mermaid antagonists (Gemma Ward and Astrid Bergés-Frisbey) underscore the allure of the myth, with almost perfect seductive features. The transformation once the underwater maidens captured their prey was a little too computer-generated, but the underlying relationship between religion (the missionary) and sex (the mermaid) was actually fun to watch, in a voyeuristic way.



Blackbeard in 3D: Ian McShane in 'Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides'

Photo credit: Peter Mountain for © Disney Enterprises

It is about story in this latest Pirates saga, and the story is sound. The conclusion could have been better (and more complete), but the ride to get there was much more compelling than the previous two films and more sensibly ambitious. The Pirate films are what they are, but this time it wasn't lazy or contrived. Throwing in a little history helped the context immensely, to show what a pirate was really up against.

However, there has to be a tipping point with this series, how many quests must one Jack Sparrow have? It's possible that he may become domesticated, destined to partner with the fair Angelica into old age, culminating in "Pirates of the Caribbean: On Golden Pond."

*"Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides" opens everywhere May 20th. See local listings for 3D showings. Featuring Johnny Depp, Penélope Cruz, Geoffrey Rush, Ian McShane, Kevin McNally, Sam Claflin, Gemma Ward, Astrid Bergés-Frisbey and Keith Richards. Screenplay by Ted Elliott and Terry Rossio, directed by Rob Marshall. Rated "PG"*



[14]

By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [15]  
Senior Staff Writer  
HollywoodChicago.com  
[pat@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com) [14]



© 2011 Patrick McDonald, HollywoodChicago.com

**Source URL (retrieved on *Mar 29 2024 - 3:00am*):**  
<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/14401/johnny-depp-in-pirates-of-the-caribbean-on-stranger-tides-is-back-on-track>

**Links:**

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hankq>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/geoffrey-rush>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/hollywoodchicagocom-content>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/ian-mcshane>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/johnny-depp>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/keith-richards>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/kevin-mcnally>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/review.html>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/patrick-mcdonald>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/penelope-cruz>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/pirates-of-the-caribbean-on-stranger-tides>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/rob-marshall>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/walt-disney-picture>
- [14] <mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#PAT>