

## ‘Transformers: Dark of the Moon’ Gets Adrenalin Pumping

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on June 28, 2011 - 9:27am

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Rating: **2.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – The final 45 minutes of “Transformers: Dark of the Moon” are such an orgy of CGI insanity, falling skyscrapers, and battling robots that the film approaches some sort of summer movie nirvana, or at least it will for the right audience. There’s little debate that the Chicago-set climax of Michael Bay’s third film based on Hasbro’s line of toys delivers what it promises. Sadly, the previous 100 minutes are nearly intolerable. Buy a ticket for “Dark of the Moon,” go see another 100-minute movie and come back for what matters. You won’t miss a thing.

Very few filmmakers have the brass balls (or obnoxious gall depending on your viewpoint) to open their film not only with three Presidential impersonators (Kennedy, Nixon, Obama) but with a complete dismantling of American history to make it fit into “Transformers” mythology. It turns out the entire space race has been an excuse to mine Autobot technology and that both the U.S. and Russia knew all along that one of their spaceships had crashed on the other side of the moon. Even Buzz Aldrin (who cameos, believe it or not) was in on the conspiracy. Screenwriter Ehren Kruger and Bay go as far as to suggest that the Chernobyl disaster was due to experimentation with part of the Autobot ship – one can easily question the taste there, even more so during a scene that invokes memories of the Challenger explosion. Considering they’ve rewritten a massive part of the last five decades of international history without much concern about sacred ground, one can only assume that this franchise will eventually re-imagine the birth of Jesus Christ as somehow related to Autobots and Decepticons.



Transformers: Dark of the Moon

*Photo credit: Paramount Pictures*

Of course, the interstellar drama isn’t nearly as important as what’s happening with Sam Witwicky (Shia LaBeouf). Despite saving the world twice, he’s having trouble getting a job. His model-girlfriend Carly (Rosie Huntington-Whiteley, infamously replacing Megan Fox as the hottie of the franchise) still loves him but she’s clearly being wooed by her boss (a sleazy Patrick Dempsey) and Sam’s starting to worry that she’ll soon realize that she’s out of his league. He eventually does find a job although its importance to the plot is so secondary (other than to get John Malkovich and Ken Jeong involved in the movie for a few scenes) that it’s completely disposable.

What matters to the “story” of “Dark of the Moon” is that the Autobots, still led by Optimus Prime (Peter Cullen), have been helping us protect the world from terrorism when they stumble upon the NASA cover-up. It turns out that the ship that crashed on the moon was carrying pillars that could transport enemies or even planets across the universe. Naturally, Autobots and Decepticons both want a technology that can unleash countless allies at one time and poor humans want to stop them. Frances McDormand gets involved as an Intelligence Director and Josh Duhamel & Tyrese Gibson return to kick some robot ass. Of course, John Turturro returns for comic relief, aided by the great Alan Tudyk (“Firefly”) in a mostly-throwaway role.



Transformers: Dark of the Moon

*Photo credit: Paramount Pictures*

Character doesn’t matter in the “Transformers” franchise and yet Bay and Kruger spend an AMAZING amount of time “getting to the good stuff.” Does anyone care about Sam trying to find a job? His love life? On that note, very few pairs have had as little chemistry as LaBeouf and Huntington-Whiteley, a beautiful young lady who the 3D camera loves who nonetheless is absolutely unbelievable here in every single way. It’s hard to believe that an actress could make you miss the subtlety of Megan Fox, but RHW tries. Watching Sam bicker with his obnoxious parents again or work the mailroom at his new job is just awkward and uncomfortable, like watching a really bad opening act for the band you really want to see.

As for performances, LaBeouf has never been less engaging but it’s not his fault as much as Kruger and Bay’s. After facing criticism that the second film was hard to follow, they obsessively repeat everything in their plot just to make sure you get it. Nearly every line of dialogue revolves around what the speaker is doing or what needs to be done. A conservative editor could cut 60 minutes from the film and most audiences would still be able to follow it. My favorite example is when Buzz Aldrin shows up to explain what we just saw in the first fifteen minutes of the movie. Maybe he’s there for people who like to show up late.





Transformers: Dark of the Moon  
Photo credit: Paramount Pictures

While it's nice that the story of "Dark of the Moon" is leaner than "Revenge of the Fallen," what's more essential to the film's relative success is that the action has been streamlined as well. In the second film, it was nearly impossible to follow what was going on in the twisting, turning metal. Bay has acknowledged that criticism and the action here is vastly superior to the last film in that you rarely lose track of what's happening under the CGI and the scope of the final act is massive without falling apart under its weight.

Until that final act, most people will be willing to write off "Transformers: Dark of the Moon" entirely. It's silly, repetitive, and pretty boring. And then Michael Bay gets to what I think he's been building towards for three films now and jaws will drop. Having done this as long as I have, I rarely have "whoa" moments but there are a few in the sure-to-be-Oscar-nominated final act in which the visual effects are so incredible that criticism falls away. When buildings are collapsing and robots are being dragged along the Magnificent Mile, Michael Bay successfully triggers that part of your brain that just wants to see something cool. How much you need to feed that adrenalin-pumping need with your summer movie dollar will determine your enjoyment of "Transformers: Dark of the Moon," but even the most cynical are likely to leave if not satisfied by the insanity of the final act then just too numb to complain.

*"Transformers: Dark of the Moon" stars Shia LaBeouf, Rosie Huntington-Whiteley, Frances McDormand, Josh Duhamel, Tyrese Gibson, John Turturro, Alan Tudyk, Ken Jeong, Patrick Dempsey, and John Malkovich. It was written by Ehren Kruger and directed by Michael Bay. It is rated PG-13 and opens on Wednesday, June 29, 2011 (with sneak previews tonight, June 28, 2011).*



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