

It All Ends With Satisfying 'Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on July 14, 2011 - 7:52pm

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – So this is how it ends – not with a whimper but with a big, magical bang. After a decade of captivating movie audiences worldwide, will “Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows – Part 2” appease the fans who have been eagerly anticipating the end of the saga of the boy who lived? It almost certainly will. It’s hard to imagine fans leaving the final “Potter” film with deep disappointment in this satisfying conclusion. But “satisfying” is not the same as captivating, magical, or spectacular. “Deathly Hallows” is none of those things. It’s a well-executed slice of fantasy entertainment that nonetheless fails to rise to the level of true classic.

With nary a recap, “Deathly Hallows – Part 2” dives right into the magical action. One of the problems with the film is that there’s almost no traditional narrative arc at all, meaning that the film doesn’t really stand on its own. Great final chapters work in context of what came before AND as their own film. “Deathly Hallows – Part 2” is almost all final act; all climax. Yes, this was inevitable after they decided to cut the final book in half but it has left a final film that’s so focused that it can be a bit monotonous. Of course, fans would say that the battle between Voldemort and Harry Potter is so universe-shaking that it deserved an entire film, but I look forward to being able to watch both “Deathly Hallows” films in one sitting so both halves have the weight that I think they could if they were a complete, single work.



Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2

Photo credit: Warner Bros. Pictures

The plot is simple. Harry (Daniel Radcliffe), Ron (Rupert Grint), and Hermione (Emma Watson) prepare for and fight the final battle against the evil Voldemort (Ralph Fiennes). That’s really the entirety of “Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows – Part 2” from a plot perspective. Sure, there are a few minor subplots and an entertaining early sequence in the vault of Bellatrix Lestrange (Helena Bonham Carter), but the most famous trio of child wizards in history get back to Hogwarts relatively early in the film and the rest is the legendary battle. Severus Snape (Alan Rickman), McGonagall (Maggie Smith), the ghost of Dumbledore (Michael Gambon), and even Neville Longbottom (Matthew Lewis) will all play major roles in the final battle of all final battles.

There’s a fine line between artistic interpretation and simple execution. The David Yates-directed “Potter” films (#5-7) have, with few exceptions, nailed the execution. They are well-shot (Eduardo Serra’s work here is particularly strong) with moving scores and expert production values. The final scenes in the saga of Harry Potter look “right” but don’t produce the awe of truly great fantasy films that comes with true artistic interpretation. The scope of the battle more than once brought to mind the last hour of “Lord of the Rings: Return of the King”

but without the personal touch of that work.

There are moments of cinematic beauty, but "Deathly Hallows" is a film that's much easier to respect than to admire. It looks good. It's entertaining. But that variable that takes something from well-done to truly memorable isn't there. Perhaps Yates fell victim to staying loyal to the books or he simply thought so highly of the source material that he didn't want to risk adding his own voice, but there's a human touch missing from his films (that Alfonso Cuarón brought to "Azkaban," easily the best of the franchise). Everything proceeds as expected with only the rare visual or storytelling surprises. I wanted something to grab me by the gut emotionally or pull at my heartstrings organically. Or just surprise me. "Deathly Hallows – Part 2" is a film that's easy to admire intellectually but that never fully engaged me on a deeper level.



Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2

Photo credit: Warner Bros. Pictures

Even if I don't love it, it's a hard movie not to like. What I like the most about "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows – Part 2" can probably be attributed to J.K. Rowling. I had not read the books so I did not know what to expect thematically even if I had my suspicions based on the previous films. Most of all, I love the clear theme in this final film that anyone can be the hero, not just the chosen boy. And I respect the storytelling that so strongly places an emphasis on sacrifice for a greater good. While those are clearly strengths of the book, credit should go to Steve Kloves for adapting them to the big screen.

As for performances, there's not much time between massive CGI battles (all of which have a nice depth, never coming off too cartoonish), but Radcliffe proves that he's come quite a long way since "Sorcerer's Stone" while Gambon and Fiennes knock their few scenes out of the park. They're two of our best living actors. Grint & Watson certainly aren't bad but they're reduced to followers a bit by the story. This is Radcliffe and Fiennes' show and they don't disappoint.

Clearly, there's a lot of accomplished work in "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows – Part 2." The fact that it never fully grabbed me to the point where my respect for it turned into adoration doesn't mean that it won't do precisely that for you. I can understand people falling hard for this highly-anticipated finale. We've spent a decade waiting for this moment. The fact that it satisfies instead of truly blowing us away may not matter while we bask in the glow of the final battle.

"Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2" stars Daniel Radcliffe, Rupert Grint, Emma Watson, Ralph Fiennes, Michael Gambon, Maggie Smith, Matthew Lewis, Helena Bonham Carter, and Alan Rickman. It was adapted by Steve Kloves and directed by David Yates. It will be released on July 15th, 2011 and is rated PG-13.



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