

## ‘Snow White and the Huntsman’ Dwarfed By Comatose Kristen Stewart, Melodramatic Charlize Theron

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Rating: **2.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – If you can stomach forgiving the film’s uneven acting, inconsistent pacing and a higgledy-piggledy script that feels like it’s still in draft mode, just zero in on the only newsworthy question about “Snow White and the Huntsman”: Who are those “dwarves”?

And why are there *eight* of them? Most important of all, why aren’t **ANY** of them real, you know, dwarves? Has HBO’s “Game of Thrones” made you too famous, Peter Dinklage?



Kristen Stewart as Snow White in “Snow White and the Huntsman”.

*Image credit: Universal Pictures*

Admittedly, these eight dwarves steal the show in this otherwise drab and lackluster film. But examining them further leaves us with a double-edged sword of both loving and loathing them. Debut “Snow White and the Huntsman” director Rupert Sanders is very uppity about his casting decision to round up a who’s who of British acting masters.

“It was almost like casting a British gangster film,” Sanders recalls in the film’s production notes. “I needed to find tough guys with big hearts.”

Sanders seduced the cream of the British acting crop to play the film’s dwarves. Through an amalgamation of special Hollywood effects and old-fashioned trickery, you *will* believe their diminutive size. Sanders panhandled each potential dwarf separately with drawings of them as the characters as well as elaborate back stories for these warriors.





Charlize Theron as The Queen in “Snow White and the Huntsman”.

*Image credit: Alex Bailey*

But none of the back stories shone through in the film nor could its three writers be bothered to isolate or distinguish their varied personalities. Aside from the old, blind dwarf, the rest are just dwarves who all respect and fawn after Snow White. One happens to score himself an incongruous slow dance with Snow White, which appears to be defining moment in his life.

And it could be construed as politically incorrect to cast and digitize non-dwarf actors in dwarf roles without turning to people like Peter Dinklage.

The *eight* dwarves are played by Ian McShane (Blackbeard in “Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides”) as Beith, Johnny Harris as Quert, Bob Hoskins as Muir, Toby Jones (Dobby in the “Harry Potter” films) as Coll, Eddie Marsan (“Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows”) as Duir, Brian Gleeson as Gus, Ray Winstone (Beowulf in “Beowulf”) as Gort and Nick Frost (Ed in “Shaun of the Dead”) as Nion.



Snow White (Kristen Stewart) confronts a fearsome Dark Forest creature in “Snow White and the Huntsman”.

*Image credit: Rhythm & Hues/Universal Pictures*

Dwarves aside, viewers can appreciate strong, intelligent, feminist thinking in a film that’s led by two leading ladies whose roles are at divisive odds with each other. But a king taking a queen from a dilapidated peasant after one day of love (lust) at first sight – who irrationally very quickly murders him to take reign over his kingdom – is ludicrous, “oh come on!” scripting.



And while the film builds up Snow White as the fantasy land's god-like savior, Kristen Stewart plays the part like a lethargic zombie desperate to return to “Twilight” loves Edward or Jacob. Any hint of anyone she's supposed to love or be loved by in this film lacks utter authenticity.

Snow White is set up throughout these long 127 minutes as the purest of them all. In the end, her transformation from fair to fierce into a battle-hardened warrior and kingdom leader is as believable as an honest politician. And the flip-flop is as ridiculous as T-Mobile's pink-dressed “nice girl” metamorphosing into a provocative, leather-clad, motorcycle-riding badass.



The Huntsman (Chris Hemsworth) and Snow White (Kristen Stewart) in “Snow White and the Huntsman”.

*Image credit: Alex Bailey*

That said, “Snow White and the Huntsman” serves as a first-rate testament to the genii of this film's makeup and special effects departments. Most notably, Charlize Theron as the evil queen Ravenna is commendably taken through a visual roller-coaster of young to old and back to youthful again after she sucks the essences of the young and the beautiful.

All the while, it's completely illogical why this woman would have such a deadly addiction to the mirror on the wall – oddly spewing out a faceless “Mirror Man” enveloped in gold – telling her she's the fairest of them all. People age. Wrinkles form. Deal with it, girl, or check Groupon for a non-homicidal way to cosmetically treat those lines and bags.

The film's three writers lazily leave out a strong back story for Ravenna and much of the film in general. Ravenna lost someone, so she's devoting her life to slaughtering innocents and always looking younger. Yeah. Yeah. This is writer Evan Daugherty's first major credit (so we forgive you) and John Lee Hancock wrote “The Blind Side,” but Hossein Amini? Come on. You wrote Ryan Gosling's Oscar-nominated “Drive,” remember?





Charlize Theron as The Queen consults with the Mirror Man in “Snow White and the Huntsman”.

Image credit: The Mill/Universal Pictures

The most inexcusable part of Charlize Theron’s Ravenna is her inability to control herself. She’s so awkwardly irate when you don’t believe she should be and she shrieks in such irrational fury that you “see” this A-list actor melodramatically overacting. Dial it back, find your happy place of Zen and controllably explode when the moments are genuine rather than unnaturally just because you’re getting paid to.

In “others who almost took the role” news, the role of Ravenna also considered Angelina Jolie and Winona Ryder, but Theron took it instead of a role in Leonardo DiCaprio’s “J. Edgar”. Johnny Depp, Tom Hardy, Michael Fassbender, Viggo Mortensen and Hugh Jackman were all considered to play The Huntsman, which went to “Thor” star Chris Hemsworth. Lily Collins almost snagged the film’s lead role, but lost to Kristen Stewart and was later cast in “Mirror Mirror,” which is 2012’s other Snow White film.

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Too often a film fails on its ability to skillfully write, portray or act out a compelling story, but its redeeming savior is expensive special effects. Yes, those points are won by a black-glass fight scene with Ravenna along with a standout happy moment in a fairy forest with cutesy imaginary creatures. But a film can’t be rewarded just for its CGI. Viewers deserve the total cinematic package and they don’t get it here.

*“Snow White and the Huntsman” stars Kristen Stewart, Charlize Theron, Chris Hemsworth, Ian McShane, Ray Winstone, Eddie Marsan, Sam Claflin, Sam Spruell, Bob Hoskins, Nick Frost, Toby Jones, Johnny Harris, Brian Gleeson, Vincent Regan and Liberty Ross. The film is directed by Rupert Sanders and written by Evan Daugherty, John Lee Hancock and Hossein Amini. “Snow White and the Huntsman” is produced by “Alice in Wonderland” producer Joe Roth. The film, which has a running time of 127 minutes and opened on June 1, 2012, is rated “PG-13” for intense sequences of violence and action and brief sensuality.*



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