

## Adam Fendelman: 'The Dark Knight Rises' Realizes Nolan's Trifecta: One of History's Greatest Trilogies

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Rating: **4.5/5.0**

CHICAGO (*No-Spoiler Promise!*) – In a Hollywood test tube, pour one part Michael Bay and his pure “Transformers” eye candy plus another part Quentin Tarantino with his rich writing and masterful characters. The resulting mutation is Christopher Nolan and his near-perfect Batman conclusion – “The Dark Knight Rises” – to one of the greatest trilogies of all time.

Complimented with some of the world's best-known and most-loved superhero characters from DC Comics, we have Bob Kane to blame for his epic concoction. Kane created his Batman amalgamation from a combination of Zorro (a wealthy playboy/masked hero), the Shadow (a dark superhero) and Dracula (a bat-like creature). But even Batman – as we especially see in “The Dark Knight” and now “The Dark Knight Rises” – is only as strong as his most villainous horror.



Tom Hardy as Bane in “The Dark Knight Rises”.

*Image credit: Ron Phillips, DC Comics*

Since 2008’s “The Dark Knight,” “Rises” four years later always faced one major mountain: bringing to life an antihero as flawless as the late Heath Ledger’s Oscar-winning Joker.

Tom Hardy’s Bane had monstrous shoes to fill. “Rises” would have failed miserably had Hardy – who you sometimes can’t understand, by design, through his pain-relieving mask – not converted that mountain into such a beautiful nightmare. The result is two consecutive Batman films turning in two of the most memorable, most terrifying, most “R”-feeling villains for a “PG-13” film.

This film needn’t intoxicate the blockbuster-hungry masses with skin, smut nor language. Rather, intense sequences of joy-riding violence and menacing action shots more titanic than you’ve ever seen will both earn awe-inspiring respect from teenagers and adults while simultaneously giving serious caution to parents about bringing any kid aged 10 to 13.





Anne Hathaway as Selina Kyle/Catwoman in “The Dark Knight Rises”.

*Image credit: Ron Phillips, DC Comics*

The third time around, Nolan bests even himself from two earlier films while his aggression translates into over-the-top Hollywood spectacle. Because of it, we can forgive some holes.

Anne Hathaway’s Catwoman instantly knows how to ride the intricate Batpod, which can roll its tires over and immediately turn at 90-degree angles? (Ridiculously sweet effect, by the way, along with the flying Batplane.) And a weak, out-of-commission Batman visits a doctor after eight years who says his body has degenerated. Suddenly, though, he’s able to don his familiar Batman suit even though he’s intrinsically constructed to be weaker than Bane?

Breathe. Forgive. In Nolan we trust. To understand Nolan is to understand what women want (which men clearly can’t do). But this much is certain: Nolan is as much about story – if not more so – as he is about direction and colossal Hollywood spectacle. You can literally feel the insanity he went through while intricately penning this, which culminates a whirlwind of franchise history with his own masterfully unexpected twists and turns.



The Bat in “The Dark Knight Rises”.

*Image credit: Warner Bros. Pictures*

Love it or not – and most everyone will – Nolan’s pigeonholed into bigger, better and faster so much so that sometimes he loses discretion and an ability to hold back.



While I personally wouldn’t have amped down a single moment of intensity in a film that barely allows you to breathe from second one through minute 164, not everyone can stomach it all. Real-life [bloodshed in Colorado surrounding the film](#) [18] will be forever coupled with this film like 9/11 has been etched into the American consciousness.

But the most important decision you can make about whether or not to experience Batman’s protective reign over Gotham – drawn out of cavernous hibernation by Bane after eight years – isn’t *if* you should see the film. *When* you do – because you know you want to regardless of what I say or any of the few dozen critics whose [lives have literally been threatened on the fruit-flinging site Rotten Tomatoes](#) [19] for thinking it rotten – you need only decide *where*.



Joseph Gordon-Levitt as John Blake in “The Dark Knight Rises”.

*Image credit: Ron Phillips, DC Comics*

Allow me to make that choice stupid simple: *IMAX or not at all*. Nolan manically shot nearly half of “Rises” using hulking IMAX cameras. The 70-millimeter frame of the go-big-or-go-home format is 10 times the size of standard movie film. Nolan also demanded of Warner Bros. to distribute his epic finale in 100 IMAX theatres minimum that project it on actual film rather than the code-based digital medium that has been steadily superseding celluloid.

And it’s for sound reason, too, because experiencing this cinematic behemoth on a standard theatrical screen is like recreating “The Godfather” with high school theatre students. Move over, 3D. The film was filmed in IMAX for IMAX screens. You’d might as well waste your time renting “Beverly Hills Chihuahua” at home if you don’t slurp this one in on the projector we could see on Earth from its beam of light on the moon.

IMAX footage consumes more than 60 minutes of this majesty and therefore liberates it – yielding exactly what a moviegoer feels. Never before has IMAX been as critical to a film’s narrative. Seeing it any other way is like closing one eye on one of the film’s most important characters.





Tom Hardy as Bane (left) and Christian Bale as Bruce Wayne/Batman in "The Dark Knight Rises".

Image credit: Ron Phillips, DC Comics

At the global box office, anything less than \$1 billion will be underwhelming. Though apples to "The Avengers" oranges, that Marvel film has put up \$1.4 billion and "Rises" needs to knock closely on its door. All in all, if "Batman Begins" or "The Dark Knight" didn't earn your pledge to at least respect other Batman fanatics, "The Dark Knight Rises" will. You'll now believe in Batman, and in 2012, you'll finally feel like you've just witnessed one of the biggest movies you've ever seen.

*"The Dark Knight Rises" stars Christian Bale, Tom Hardy, Michael Caine, Gary Oldman, Anne Hathaway, Liam Neeson, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Marion Cotillard, Morgan Freeman, Juno Temple, Alon Aboutboul, Nestor Carbonell, Tom Conti, Josh Pence, Aidan Gillen, Joey King, Matthew Modine, Josh Stewart and Daniel Sunjata from writer and director Christopher Nolan and writer Jonathan Nolan. The film, which has a running time of 164 minutes and opened on July 20, 2012, is rated rated "PG-13" for intense sequences of violence and action, some sensuality and language.*



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