

## ‘Sin City: A Dame to Kill For’ Breaks No New Ground

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on August 21, 2014 - 8:44pm

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Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – When the first “Sin City” (2005) was released – based on the graphic novels by Frank Miller – the conversion of a film to a noir-like comic book atmosphere was pioneering. The sequel “Sin City: A Dame to Kill For” has heightened that look, but this time has much less to say.

With an all-star cast, and leftover revenge factors from the first film, co-directors Robert Rodriguez and Frank Miller – with a guest director credit from Quentin Tarantino – pile on the quality kills, nudity and extreme gunplay. This plays fine for the 15-year-old boy in all of us, but doesn’t challenge itself beyond that commonality, and the film suffers from a redundancy that starts to draw away even from the super hyper, black-and-white city of darkness. “Sin City” still packs a jolt to the senses, but once the first wave hits, the rest hit the shore with diminishing power.

This is a “meanwhile” plot, divided like stories in a comic book, all set in Sin City. In “Just Another Saturday Night,” Marv (Mickey Rourke) tries to remember how he got to a point on a highway, surrounded by dead men. Meanwhile, in “The Long Bad Night,” a gambler named Johnny (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) takes on Senator Roark (Powers Boothe) in a huge poker game, with his good luck charm Marcie (Julie Garner).



Dame Ava (Eva Green) Beguiles Dwight (Josh Brolin) in ‘Sin City: A Dame to Kill For’

*Photo credit: The Weinstein Company*

In the episode “A Dame to Kill For,” Dwight (Josh Brolin) tries to stay away from his former lover Ava (Eva Green), but returns to try and get her away from her husband and his massive body guard Manute (Dennis Haysbert). Finally, in “Nancy’s Last Dance,” Marv and stripper Nancy (Jessica Alba) avenge the suicide of John Hartigan (Bruce Willis) by going after his enemy, Senator Roark.

The players interact in each other’s stories, but the choppy episodic nature of the movie could have benefited from more cohesiveness. Alba, Rosario Dawson (as a kick-ass dame called Gail), Boothe, Rourke and Willis return from the first film, and a re-watch of that “book one” may make the sequel more enjoyable. There was a lot to take in, plus two new stories involving Brolin and Gordon-Levitt, so without a handy guide to the first “Sin City,” the players do get a bit muddled.

All the characters do voice-overs, in that 1940s noir film style – in fact the whole of Sin City is a hybrid of 1940s, ‘50s and early ‘60s urban decay – and they all seemed to take lessons from the Christian Bale School of Talking Like Batman. Between Brolin and Gordon-Levitt, who both take overwrought beatings, there is no distinction of character. It is more about getting them in, establishing their motivations, and start firing guns or applying the violence. There are even several beheadings, mostly administered by martial artist Miho (Jamie Chung), and I suspect Quentin “Kill Bill” Tarantino had much to do with those scenes.

I love that Rourke still has a presence in the movies, and his Marv character – for which he wears a prosthetic mask – is still cool. However, to establish him as a magical killing machine, who can dodge any bad guy bullet, gets old real fast. Also, this wasn’t a good experience for henchmen, especially those working for Ava’s husband. I would hope their life insurance was up to date, because that whole staff suffered a series of quality kills.



Marvelous Marv (Mickey Rourke) in 'Sin City: A Dame to Kill For'

Photo credit: The Weinstein Company

It's obvious in nine years there would be more CGI toys to make the look of Sin City that much more special, but once the action gets going it doesn't seem as vivid as the first film, because the first film had a superior story. But if you've never stepped inside Sin City, be ready to be wowed by its ghostly attitude, luscious (and gratuitous) female nudity and comic book blood – gallons of it. In the battle of the femme fatales, Green as Ava takes the crown, probably because that's all she would be wearing. Jessica Alba seems a bit lost, and has the unenviable role of stripper who doesn't take her clothes off.

Sin City is always worth a visit, despite the efforts of the creators to make it less of a worthwhile stay. The aforementioned "15-year-old boy" inside us all will be satisfied, but the rest of our psyche might wonder where the guts of the story are.

*"Sin City: A Dame to Kill For" opens everywhere on August 22nd in 3D and regular screenings. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Mickey Rourke, Josh Brolin, Jessica Alba, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Rosario Dawson, Bruce Willis, Eva Green, Powers Boothe, Dennis Haybert, Ray Liotta, Jeremy Piven, Julie Garner and Christopher Lloyd. Written by Frank Miller. Directed by Frank Miller and Robert Rodriguez, with special guest director Quentin Tarantino. Rated "R"*



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