

‘King Arthur: Legend of the Sword’ is a Dull, Magicless Bore

Submitted by [JonHC](#) [1] on May 12, 2017 - 6:27pm

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Rating: **1.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – Have you ever had such a bad case of déjà vu while watching a film that trying to remember where the familiar elements are from turns into a more enjoyable experience than actually seeing the film itself? If you haven’t, your quest for that kind of film is fulfilled by the incredibly forgettable “King Arthur: Legend of the Sword.”

Is it a long lost relation of the “Lord of the Rings” franchise? Yes, but probably a third cousin judging by the familiar, yet inferior approach. Does it cinematically play out like a typical, fantasy-based video game? You could probably give the audience each a video game controller and they would know what to do with it since more than a few of the climactic sequences have the same execution as a boss-level video game battle. Is the movie actually popular “Lord of the Rings”-based video game “Middle-earth: Shadow of Mordor”? “King Arthur” would be so lucky, especially since many of the fighting sequences, especially those involving the sword (who at no point do they refer to as Excalibur for some unknown reason), mimic the gameplay and powers in the video game.



Arthur (Charlie Hunnam) pulls a sword from a stone but should that really be what makes a king? This question and more don’t get answered in ‘King Arthur: Legend of the Sword’

Photo credit: Warner Bros.

The failures of the film begin with the story itself. The story is the brainchild of writers David Dobkin ("Jack the Giant Slayer", "R.I.P.D.") and Joby Harold, but it is obvious how heavy Dobkin's influence permeates every aspect of the project. After seeing the film, you wouldn't believe three people had their hand in writing the screenplay with simplistic the dialogue and story trod along, but as my mother used to say, "Too many swords will spoil the stew," or some variation of that. Writers Joby Harold, Lionel Wigram, and Guy Ritchie show us that the pen is not mightier than the nameless sword. They create a loosely based Arthurian tale that turns the once magical medieval Britain of lore into a generic tale that's just a bore. Historical inaccuracies are the least of this film's problems.

The story itself is one not based on the story of King Arthur, but instead a generic tale we've heard all too often. If anything, I could even present a strong case on how it is essentially the "The Lion King" except with humans and magic (although "The Lion King" is magical in its own special way). The story is drenched in so much testosterone that I'm almost certain that everyone who watched it left with a newly grown beard or at least some 5 o'clock shadow. This tale is for men, about men, and with an appeal to few else. Some of the key female figures of Arthurian lore are noticeably missing, such as Guinevere and Morgan le Fay. Instead, they are replaced by several women the film deems disposable, or who are only used as a weak catalyst to try and create an emotional depth within the male characters. The one female character of power we do get never is given (or even asked for) a name, as is only known as The Mage (played by Astrid Bergès-Frisbey). Perfect film for mom this Mother's Day weekend, am I right?



Since no one asked her what her name is, she is only known as The Mage (Astrid Bergès-Frisbey) in 'King Arthur: Legend of the Sword'
Photo credit: Warner Bros.

Guy Ritchie's specialty is in the purely stylized and not so much a cohesive, well-paced story. His filmography ("Man from U.N.C.L.E.", "Sherlock Holmes", "RocknRolla") has made it clear that his primary goal is to visually impress us, with every other aspect becoming secondary to that. Aside from the costume design, there is little dazzling in Ritchie's cringe-worthy CGI cavalcade. At least half of the film plays out like a music video with grating, metal music playing over montages that are meant to move the story along. More than a couple of times the music is meant to mirror the emotion of the film, which usually translates to some ill-conceived rage session where Arthur (Charlie Hunnam) is doing the tantrum equivalent of angry running in place. I guess that's what is suppose to pass as character development in the film.

When "King Arthur" isn't taking us along a tour of the countryside, it is aggressively dragging us from scene to scene as the film jump cuts with little explanation. The erratic editing not only gives the film a diagnosis of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder but it also never lets what should be the emotional climaxes a moment to develop before it blindly moves the film forward. Instead, you are left noticing how the film itself feels like it was just meant to stroke the male ego and embody some sort of male fragility with its buff chests and phallic towers of power. They even went as far as to change Jude Law's character into a big, muscle-headed brute for the climactic battle for some unexplained reason aside from we can only glean is a not-so-very subtle form of cinematic overcompensation.



Vortigern (Jude Law) just can't wait to be king in 'King Arthur: Legend of the Sword'
Photo credit: Warner Bros.

Historical inaccuracies aside, this film is extremely diverse with its male cast, which is one of the only things going for it. With so many actors fighting for screen time, they each do a good job giving us at least a vague idea about their characters. Charlie Hunnam gives a very aggressive performance in a character that is as dull as the stone the sword came out of. Hunnam isn't given a lot to work with, but his macho bravado and overly-cocky swagger are all the film really calls for and he delivers. Anything aside from that falls flat, including trying to deliver a convincing emotional story arc for a character that never rises above one dimension. Every other character ends up becoming a shell held together by about one line of expository dialogue to explain their motivation and nothing else. Even Jude Law as the villain Vortigern doesn't come off nearly as dastardly or villainous as the true scoundrels of this film: the writers.

"King Arthur: Legend of the Sword" opens everywhere on May 12th. Featuring Charlie Hunnam, Jude Law, Astrid Bergès-Frisbey, Djimon Hounsou, Eric Bana, Aidan Gillen, Tom Wu and Annabelle Wallis. Screenplay by Joby Harold, Guy Ritchie and Lionel Wigram. Directed by Guy Ritchie. Rated "PG-13"



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