

Johnny Depp Stays Afloat in 'Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales'

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on May 26, 2017 - 4:10pm

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – The “Pirates Of The Caribbean” series has undergone a strange transformation over five films. The first film was better than any movie “based on a theme park ride” then it had any business being. But now in its fifth film voyage, “Dead Men Tell No Tales” bears a closer resemblance to the ride now more than ever. It’s not so much a high seas adventure as a genial pleasure cruise, with Johnny Depp’s Jack Sparrow as a bumbling court jester of a captain.

Depp is something of a bystander in his own movie this time around. The plot centers around Sparrow and something known as “Poseidon’s Trident,” but the good Captain is largely a passive and comedic figure – he doesn’t do things as much as he has things done to him. The film begins with him being dragged through town during a bank robbery, in a kind of big-for-bigness sake set piece common in aging blockbuster franchises. Then he’s pushed, pulled, tossed, flipped and battered around, and rarely moves under his own power.



Johnny Depp in 'Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales'

Photo credit: Walt Disney Pictures

Depp's Captain Jack is seemingly drunk and stumbling around at all times, screaming in the face of danger, and then running away like a juvenile manchild imitating a scared little girl. I could see that the schtick was no longer fresh, and I'm not sure Depp wasn't actually drunk while performing the role, that he can undoubtedly pull off in his sleep. But against my better judgement I still found him mildly amusing, if a bit motheaten and stale... he is primed and ready to pop in and clear his head long enough to deliver the kind of corny one liners and hoary puns that you'd might expect from a dad at a backyard barbeque.

The plot doesn't make much sense, but it involves a pirate-hunting Spaniard named Salazar, portrayed by Javier Bardem. He was bested by Sparrow and now lives on as a ghost with an undead crew of decomposing shipmates, and a vessel which can come apart at the seams to swallow whatever unlucky ships cross its path.

When Sparrow trades his magic compass for a bottle of rum – which strangely is one of the films lesser stretches of credulity – it frees Bardem from his Bermuda Triangle-like limbo and returns him to the sea, to hunt Captain Jack again. Bardem knows that a waterlogged adventure like this can use a good ham, and he chews every shred of scenery he can get his hands on... he's essentially a Khan for the high seas, and that's a good thing. The special effects are good too, with Bardem's ghostly villain's hair constantly swaying as though he were still in a watery grave.



Javier Bardem in 'Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales'

Photo credit: Walt Disney Pictures

The film throws moldy corpses, ghost sharks, and Geoffrey Rush's grizzled pirate Barbossa into the mix as it moves along. It's thankfully less bloated than the third film ("At World's End") and new directors Joachim Ronning and Espen Sandberg know they're not reinventing the wheel. They just try to keep the aging ship off the rocks, and for the most part they succeed.

My enjoyment of the film is somewhat influenced by the fact that I am pretty sure my five year old son will love it. Captain Jack Sparrow and ghost sharks are right in his wheelhouse, so I enjoyed the movie more than I thought I would. "Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales" can't reach the enjoyment level of the first two films, but despite all the factors working against it, this voyaging ship doesn't belong in Davy Jones' Locker either.

"Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales" opens everywhere on May 26th, in 3D and regular screenings. See local listings for the 3D theaters and showtimes Featuring Johnny Depp, Javier Bardem, Geoffrey Rush, Brenton Thwaites, Kaya Scodelario, Golshifteh Farahani, Orlando Bloom and Kiera Knightly Screenplay by Jeff Nathanson. Directed by Joachin Ronning and Espen Sandberg. Rated "PG-13"



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