

## ‘Maze Runner: The Death Cure’ Has Run Out of Life

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Rating: **2.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – The third part of the “Maze Runner” trilogy is called “The Death Cure,” and that cure best describes the faint pulse of this run-out-of-steam dystopia aimed at “young adults.” It is mostly warring and not much more, except for a stab (literally) at misplaced emotion.

The trilogy started out with promise, as they are based on a novel series by James Dashner. The [first film](#) [19] had a drawing-back-the-curtain effect, promising that perhaps the strange maze our heroes had to go through was some sort of mind experiment. But by the [second film](#) [20], that effect turned into a literal and bizarre adventure in a post-apocalyptic world, a kiddie “Mad Max.” The third installment continues the second film concept, and ups the ante. More big bang effects, more guns, more 20-year-olds-portraying-teenagers-as-virus-survivalists, and less of anything to really latch onto. This is the Maze Runner film for completists only.

The film opens with a rescue by The Right Arm Resistance, who hijack a trainload of teenagers captured by the enemy agency WCKD. The agency is experimenting with immune teens whose blood might cure a deadly virus killing the rest of the world. The rescue is led by former Maze Runners Thomas (Dylan O’Brien) and Newt (Thomas Brodie-Sangster), and they succeed in bringing the train car back to their camp.



The Young Adult Cast of ‘Maze Runner: The Death Cure’



Photo credit: 20th Century Fox

It turns out that one of their own, Minho (Ki Hong Lee), is still missing. So against the orders of Resistance leader Vince (Barry Pepper), Thomas, Newt and Frypan (Dexter Darden) attempt to infiltrate the “Last City,” where tests are being performed on Minho, whose blood make contain the serum to cure the virus. The experiments are being overseen by Theresa (Kaya Scodelario) – another former Maze Runner – who works for Ava Paige (Patricia Clarkson), a leader of WCKD. With all these circumstances, the Resistance confronts WCKD.

One of the problems of the Maze Runner film series is that too much goes on, and the situation between the second and third films needed a simpler narrative. What started as a story about teens trying to navigate a maze evolved (or devolved) into a Mad Max-like future world, which is manipulated – with little explanation – by a hidden force of oligarchs trying to find a cure for the deadly worldwide virus. How are they maintaining their economic structure?

The Young Adult fiction world seems to love the bleak-future-but-plucky-young-heroes-will-solve-it style of storytelling, as “Hunger Games,” “Divergent” and the Maze Runner series all have similar themes. Yet what works on the printed page becomes bombastic when creating a visual palette, and “The Death Cure” piles on the computer-generated stunts and war, trying to balance all that with the bonding friendships of the heroes.



Thomas (Dylan O'Brien), Newt (Thomas Brodie-Sangster) and Frypan (Dexter Darden) in ‘Maze Runner: The Death Cure’

Photo credit: 20th Century Fox

The villains barely matter in this chapter, with Patricia Clarkson as Ava Paige leading the WCKD way. She was a manipulator extraordinaire in the first two films, but in the finale she is strangely muted, and relies conveniently on Theresa the double agent. But even her languishing demeanor is no match for Janson (Aidan Gillen from “Game of Thrones”). There is a “being evil” fetish with this agent of WCKD, and he is a lousy shot with a gun, because he relentlessly pursues the heroes with virtually no aim. He is as annoying a villain as Snidley Whiplash, without any of the laughs (look it up).

So thus endeth the Maze Runner series, with a true whimper among the computer-generated bangs. There was an half-assed effort to bring the story back to love and peace by the end, but the true engine of the last two films has been mind-dulling war. It’s hard to care about anyone or anything after that.

*“Maze Runner: The Death Cure” opens everywhere on January 26th. Featuring Dylan O’Brien, Kaya Scodelario, Ki Hong Lee, Dexter Darden, Will Poulter, Aidan Gillen, Barry Pepper and Patricia Clarkson. Screenplay adapted by T.S. Nowlin, from the novels by James Dashner. Directed by Wes Ball. Rated “PG-13”*



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