

You'll Be Wild About Magical 'Mary Poppins Returns'

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on December 19, 2018 - 6:49am

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Rating: **4.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – They did it. Walt Disney Studios took one of their most beloved live action/animated films and rebooted it for a new millennium. “Mary Poppins Returns” is a song-filled, emotional and magical celebration of all things Mary P, combining the elements that made it great the first time with the modern movie strengths of today.

Credit goes first and foremost to veteran director Rob Marshall (“Chicago”). Given all the legacy he had to deal with, he chose to create his own version by not borrowing one familiar song (except for incidental background instrumentals) from the 1964 film and mixing the right chemistry of current performers and wily veterans to retell the story of Mary Poppins. Emily Blunt portrays the title nanny, and understands the mystery of the character by going back to the source storybooks (by author P.L. Travers) for characterization, while formulating a character that conjures enchantment and no nonsense (how very British). Pairing her with Lin-Manuel Miranda (“Hamilton”) was a second genius stroke. He takes the mantle of the working class dreamer – in this version a lamplighter rather than a chimney sweep – and absolutely nails the song&dance man for the ages. This is a must-see holiday gift.

Jane (Emily Mortimer) and Michael (Ben Whitshaw) Banks are all grown up and facing adulthood on their own. Michael is a widower with three children who works at the same bank as his late father, but prefers the dreamer life of an artist... with Jane’s hopeful support. Because of his head in the clouds, the family is in debt and may lose their lovely house (familiar from the first film). They are in need of some nannying, so Mary Poppins (Emily Blunt) returns to their rescue.



Emily Blunt as the Title Character in 'Mary Poppins Returns'

Photo credit: Walt Disney Studios

Although their father's colleague Wilkins (Colin Firth) seems understanding, he actually is planning to procure the house, so he is doing anything to prevent the Banks from paying off the mortgage. Meanwhile, Mary Poppins is doing what she does best, caring for the Banks children with the aid of a friendly lamplighter named Jack (Lin Manuel-Miranda) and takes them on a wild ride of fantasy and adventure, while allowing them to focus on memory and love.

The natural cliché is to say that this ain't your daddy's Mary Poppins, but it is... it's for your daddy, momma, grandparents, children, friends, lovers and neighbors. It's breathtaking in its depth and feeling – just like the first film – and spins its own joy through creative songs and staging. Director Marshall has the knack and ability of an old Broadway baby, and he takes us back to the London music hall atmosphere and other locations like the sea ("Can You Imagine That"). All the songs are fresh and hummable... time will tell if they latch onto the same legendary status as the first film.

The production team went back to the original novels to fashion Blunt's Mary Poppins as a little more harder edged than Julie Andrews' portrayal. There is a sense of the mystic with Blunt, she is happy to sing and dance with the best of them, but she also wants her rescuing to be morally based around a no nonsense approach to life. It's fascinating and never overly sentimental, which gives more power to the signature song "The Place Where Lost Things Go," a vital tune that softens the remembrance of everything that has been formerly here.



Jack (Lin-Manuel-Miranda Takes the Gang for a Ride in 'Mary Poppins Returns'
Photo credit: Walt Disney Studios

Lin Manuel-Miranda, already a legend at age 38, gives Jack the Lamplighter a quality of both storyteller and participant. His connection to Mary is one of a dream state... he knows her intuitively, but also defers to her control. He highlights many of the song stagings, including "A Cover is Not the Book" and "Trip the Light Fantastic" with a showman's instinct of collaboration. He allows the others to shine while he leads them with his own sure footing. He simply was a great choice.

And who else appears? The cast list will tell you so, but let their contributions surprise you. Allow the freedom of your own connection to Disney movies to take you to another place this holiday season. Back to a time of a no-nonsense British nanny, whose heart allows her to save a precious time at the movies for refreshing your soul.

"Mary Poppins Returns" opens everywhere on December 19th. Featuring Emily Blunt, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Ben Whitshaw, Emily Mortimer, Meryl Streep, Colin Firth, Pixie Davies, Nathanael Saleh, Joel Dawson, Dick Van Dyke and Angela Lansbury. Screenplay by David Magee. Songs by Marc Shaiman, with lyrics by Shaiman and Scott Wittman. Directed by Rob Marshall. Rated "PG"



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By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [20]
Editor and Film Writer
HollywoodChicago.com
pat@hollywoodchicago.com [19]

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