

Sequel Surprisingly Surpasses the First Film in ‘Happy Death Day 2U’

Submitted by [JonHC](#) [1] on February 14, 2019 - 4:40pm

- [Back to the Future 2](#) [2]
- [Blumhouse](#) [3]
- [Christopher Landon](#) [4]
- [Groundhogs Day](#) [5]
- [Happy Death Day 2U](#) [6]
- [HDD2U](#) [7]
- [HollywoodChicago.com](#) [8]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [9]
- [Israel Broussard](#) [10]
- [Jessica Rothe](#) [11]
- [Jon Espino](#) [12]
- [Movie Review](#) [13]
- [Phi Vu](#) [14]
- [Sarah Yarkin](#) [15]
- [Steve Zississ](#) [16]
- [Suraj Sharma](#) [17]
- [Universal Pictures](#) [18]



Rating: **4.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – At some point, we’ve all experienced déjà vu. Sure, it could just be because we lead a monotonous, predictable life, but I’d personally welcome the idea of something supernatural at play over the more practical explanation. That’s exactly what “Happy Death Day” introduced, and it was a hilarious slasher take on “Groundhog Day”, and luckily the sequel, “Happy Death Day 2U”, adds to the experience.

The first “Happy Death Day” is a hard film to forget, especially since it the main character is stuck in a repeating loop of waking up, getting murdered, and starting the day over again. This sort of time loop scenario isn’t new to us, especially with iconic films like “Groundhogs Day” and “Live. Die. Repeat.” (formerly known as “Edge of Tomorrow”). There is an inherent comedy to this scenario that is impossible to deny, which is something the film embraces fully and unabashedly. Trying to use this premise with a serious tone is destined for failure, and “HDD2U” understands that’s what made its predecessor such an enjoyable treat and continues on the comedic route, with several new detours.



Photo credit: Universal Studios

Returning director and writer of “HDD2U”, Christopher Landon, has always understood how important the horror aspects of the film were, but the greater skill is how they are balanced with the necessary humor. The problem comes when a sequel feels too much like the original, which then warrants the question, “Did we really need this film?” Now that’s a question you never find yourself asking as you watch what feels like a sequel and then some. Where the first film was a comedic slasher, this film changes genres right away and becomes a full-blown sci-fi

extravaganza. When the last film ended, we didn't really care to find out how Flower Gelbmans (Jessica Rothe) first became stuck in that loop. It could have been magical, scientific or even supernatural, but the closure we received was more than enough to quench that thirst.

"HDD2U" gives us a cause, and in doing so changes the entire genre of the film while keeping it tonally similar to the first one. In a sense, there is a full embracing of the nerdiness that the first film only dared to lightly touch on. One of the reasons the story works so well as a follow up is because it seems like this was always the plan for the film. There are events that happened in the first film that perfectly corresponds to the explanation of events in the second one. This is where Landon's complete understanding of the film's narrative structure shines as he seamlessly weaves these two very different films into a complementary duology.

The story still has the slasher film skeleton, but it mostly takes a backseat in exchange for some time traveling fun. By moving the story to a different universe, it keeps things fresh and unpredictable. Is the killer still who we think it is? Are all the relationship dynamics still the same? Should we be concerned that Dre (Sarah Yarkin) has dosed Samar's (Suraj Sharma) Yoo-hoo more than once before?! These are only a few of the new questions that arise and keep us engaged through the perfect runtime of 100 minutes.



Photo credit: Universal Studios

Aside from a great diverse cast, including at least one non-binary character, "HDD2U" surpasses the first film by giving this one a genuine emotional core. There several heartfelt scenes that completely succeed at tugging on those heartstrings, with at least one being potent enough to bring the tears. It's rare when a film can get you to alternate between tears of sadness and tears of laughter, but "HDD2U" is anything but your common film sequel.

The entire cast (even those tertiary characters that get barely a line in the first one) returns with the same spark. The addition of the new characters like Dre, Samar, and Dean Roger Bronson (Steve Zissis) definitely continue the film's lighthearted energy, even if the characters are written almost as caricatures. Fleshing out the characters of Ryan (Phi Vu) and Carter (Israel Broussard) definitely help the story, but the true hero remains Flower, played impeccably by Jessica Rothe. Without the effortless likability or emotional relatability of Rothe's performance, there is no telling how enjoyable this film would be. Everything in "Happy Death Day 2U" could have changed, but no matter the universe, timeline or dimension, as long as Rothe effortlessly plays the character the same, this film was always going to be a success. Sure, it won't pass any Bechdel tests, but the emotions are genuine, the laughs are plentiful, and the terror is palpable. What more could you want in a sequel?

"Happy Death Day 2U" opens everywhere on February 14th. Featuring Jessica Rothe, Steve Zississ, Phi Vu, Israel Broussard, Sarah Yarkin, and Suraj Sharma. Directed by Christopher Landon. Written by Christopher Landon. Rated "PG-13"



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Source URL (retrieved on **Mar 28 2024 - 6:31pm**):

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- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/groundhogs-day>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/happy-death-day-2u>
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