"Chapter 2" Lacks crucial "IT" factor

Submitted by JonHC [1] on September 6, 2019 - 5:14pm

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Rating: **2.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – “It Chapter 2” has some of the same problems as its source material, and the previous adaptation of the Stephen King spine-tingler. It has a great beginning, but the ensuing story never tops or reaches the same level as that first scene. So in Chapter 2’s slog on to an ultimately unsatisfying ending, we are witnessing a yarn literally unraveling before our very eyes.

The film picks up 27 years after the events of the first film, after the gang of outcast kids dubbed “the loser club” have apparently killed Pennywise, the sadistic clown who tortured them in the first film (and remains the story’s most engaging character.) Now this band of kids are grownups who have all mostly gone their separate ways. But Mike (Isaiah Mustafa) has stayed behind in Derry, Maine and he’s the one who figures out that Pennywise has come to feast again. So he calls back Beverly (Jessica Chastain), Bill (James McAvoy with a disappearing reappearing stammer), Richie (Bill Hader), Ben (Jay Ray), and Eddie (James Ransone.) to pop this clown’s balloon for good this time.



Photo credit: Warner Bros. Pictures

“It Chapter Two” lacks two things that make a great horror picture, memorable characters, and scares. There were some agreeable archetypes among our squad of heroes as children in the first film. But as adults, they collectively add up to a big fat zero. There simply isn’t much to the thinly written characters, and McAvoy and Chastain seem a little at a loss as to what to do beyond wild-eyed flailing about. The one exception is Bill Hader’s scene-stealing turn as the grown-up “trashmouth,” adding some levity and one-liners to the grim proceedings.

Director Andy Muschetti is back too, but appearances by Pennywise the clown are few and far between. That wouldn’t be such a problem if the film had other creatures as memorable and scary as he is but it doesn’t. Chapter two adds new ghouls and creatures but none make a tenth of an impression of the crazy clown. Pennywise is best and scariest when he’s manipulative, and seemingly vulnerable as well. His best scene involves a girl chasing a firefly under the bleachers at a community softball game (which blatantly apes the opening scene in part 1 with Georgie and the storm drain). But for the most part, the scares, and Muschetti’s sped up hurry up gotcha moments, get so repetitive even pennywise begins to lose his freshness after a while.



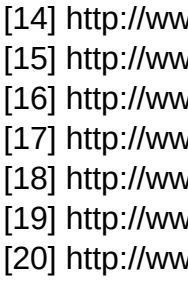
Photo credit: Warner Bros. Pictures

And this second chapter of it only prolongs the proceedings with subplots that go nowhere, including the return of local bully Henry Bowers (Teach Grant) on a stabbing spree. And he’s not the only superfluous character and fiend clogging up the proceedings in this film’s two hour and 50-minute running time. There are situations that go nowhere, and actions that make no sense. Take, for example, the film’s conceit that

everyone but Mike has largely forgotten all the details about their harrowing encounter. But they all answer his call and pack up and come to Derry at the drop of a hat leaving work, families, and everything else because of something they only vaguely have an inkling of. And then express surprise when they arrive that the clown is the reason they were summoned.

And the ending is still as unsatisfying as ever. Perhaps Stephen King sensed this because Bill (James McAvoy) is now an author and screenwriter with a distinct problem with endings. It becomes something of a running gag, with even King himself getting a little wink-wink cameo complaining about the ending of one of Bill's books. One wishes "It Chapter 2" had taken the time to try to improve it, instead of merely calling it out.

"It Chapter Two" opens everywhere on September 6th. Featuring Jessica Chastain, James McAvoy, Sophia Lillis, Isaiah Mustafa, Bill Hader, Bill Skarsgard, Jack Dylan Grazer, and Finn Wolfhard. Screenplay by Gary Dauberman. Directed by Andy Muschietti. Rated "R"


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