

Despite Jet Li's Would-Be Resurrection, 'The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor' Still Flops

Submitted by [HollywoodChicago.com](http://www.hollywoodchicago.com) [1] on July 31, 2008 - 11:35pm

- [Adam Fendelman](#) [2]
- [Brendan Fraser](#) [3]
- [Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade](#) [4]
- [Jet Li](#) [5]
- [Maria Bello](#) [6]
- [Michelle Yeoh](#) [7]
- [Movie Review](#) [8]
- [The Dark Knight](#) [9]
- [The Mummy](#) [10]
- [The Mummy Returns](#) [11]
- [The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor](#) [12]



Rating: **2.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – The threequel that culminates with “The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor” is so hackneyed that even the main star of the previous two films – Brendan Fraser – wasn’t enough to sell audiences on a third return. Universal Studios needed to enlist co-star Jet Li to stand a fighting chance and take the mood the Asian way.



Jet Li as the vicious emperor comes back to life in “The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor,” which races from the catacombs of ancient China high into the spectacular Himalayas.

Photo credit: Digital Domain, copyright Universal Studios

If there’s a single success this may have, “The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor” may finally be the only film that can vanquish the epic, two-week reign of “[The Dark Knight](#) [13]” at the box office. Projections target approximately \$50 million for its opening weekend.

Brendan Fraser’s Hollywood dossier is currently most memorable for these three films, which progress from mediocre all the way to 2008’s tragedy. Likewise, Fraser in the Indiana Jones-like role (but not nearly as well-scripted as Harrison Ford’s character) is a surefire recipe for mediocrity.

It’s no mystery why the evolution from “The Mummy” in 1999 (\$43.4 million opening; \$155.4 million total) and then “The Mummy Returns” (\$68 million opening; \$202 million total) only two years later in 2001 took seven years to yield “The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor”.



The vicious emperor (Jet Li) conjures the elements in “The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor,” which races from the catacombs of ancient China high into the spectacular Himalayas.

Photo credit: Digital Domain, copyright Universal Studios

The filmmakers, studio and production companies clearly spent seven years flailing about a single question: Do we *really* want to make a third or should we just let this one go at two? In the decision to green-light the threequel, Jet Li's star power and villainous character clearly was the film's attempt for rejuvenation.

Li, though, is more often in irate CGI character than he is in his own skin. When he's there, he is indeed menacing and ruthless, but the power of Jet Li is best harnessed when the martial master can merely be himself.



Explorers Rick (Brendan Fraser) and Evelyn O'Connell (Maria Bello) in “The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor,” which races from the catacombs of ancient China high into the spectacular Himalayas.

Photo credit: Digital Domain, copyright Universal Studios

RELATED IMAGE GALLERY



[View our full,
high-resolution “The](#)

[Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor" image gallery.](#) [14]

RELATED READING



[More film reviews from critic Adam Fendelman.](#) [2]

The third film suffered the unfortunate loss of the always brilliant Rachel Weisz, who was replaced by Maria Bello (she had the charm but lacked the fire), and Luke Ford unfortunately steps in for the first time as Brendan Fraser's son. Ford has as much acting range as the CGI abominable snowmen.

The big-effect sequences feel like Hollywood's merely pressured to deliver a blockbuster.

The difference between failed films such as "The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor" and wildly successful films such as "[Iron Man](#) [15]" and "[The Dark Knight](#) [13]" is they don't just *do* the fancy schmancy. They also have substance, too. Even Fraser himself scoffs in the film at the notion of "another mummy".

If you find yourself dozing off (like yours truly) and awaking confusingly thinking you're in "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade" (this Fraser flick clearly rips the "he needs a magical element to avert death" sequence) along with the "weapons blot out the sun" sequence, you'd be among friends.

"The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor," which stars Brendan Fraser, Jet Li, Maria Bello and Michelle Yeoh, opened everywhere on Aug. 1, 2008.



[16]

By [ADAM FENDELMAN](#) [17]
Editor-in-Chief
HollywoodChicago.com
adam@hollywoodchicago.com [16]

© 2008 Adam Fendelman, HollywoodChicago.com

Source URL (retrieved on Apr 23 2024 - 8:21am):

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/3280/despite-jet-lis-would-be-resurrection-the-mummy-tomb-of-the-dragon-emperor-still-flops>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hollywoodchicagocom>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/adam-fendelman>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/brendan-fraser>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/indiana-jones-and-the-last-crusade>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/jet-li>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/maria-bello>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/michelle-yeoh>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/review.html>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/the-dark-knight>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/the-mummy>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/the-mummy-returns>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/the-mummy-tomb-of-the-dragon-emperor>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/3123/the-dark-knight-bestows-role-of-a-lifetime-for-heath-ledger-epic-proportions-for-itself>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/image/tid/3941>
- [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/2325/iron-man-sits-indisputably-in-club-of-highest-rated-superhero-movies-of-all-time>
- [16] <mailto:adam@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [17] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#adam>