

Melodrama, Weak Performances Hold Back 'The Twilight Saga: New Moon'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on November 20, 2009 - 12:51pm

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Rating: **2.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – The amazing adoration for “The Twilight Saga: New Moon” is based on one of two things: a crush on one of the cast members or goodwill spawned by a love of Stephenie Meyer’s books. Without people’s passion for Robert Pattinson, Kristen Stewart, Taylor Lautner, or the source material, the “Twilight” films have little merit on their own. “New Moon” is a slight improvement on the last entry, but fans still deserve better.

If you have a poster of Robert Pattinson on your wall and have followed every casting announcement for “The Twilight Saga: New Moon” like Chicago Cubs fans follow their favorite team, then there’s little point in trying to dissuade you from your affection for the franchise. I understand the desire to desperately want to love on the big screen what meant so much to you on the page. It’s much the same motivation that allows people to look past the flaws of those they love. But the flaws are there and director Chris Weitz, most of the cast, writer Melissa Rosenberg, and the producers of “New Moon” could have done significantly more to hide them.



(Left to right) Robert Pattinson stars as Edward Cullen, Kristen Stewart stars as Bella Swan, and Taylor Lautner stars as Jacob Black in The Twilight Saga: New Moon.

Photo credit: Kimberley French and Summit

The film opens on the 18th birthday of our mopey heroine Bella Swan (Kristen Stewart). Bella's increasing age has led her to concern about the fact that her bloodsucking boyfriend Edward Cullen (Robert Pattinson) happens to be nearly a century older than her. How will his immortality impact their relationship?

The issue becomes more prominent when the Cullens decide to move out of town before too many locals realize that the patriarch of the clan hasn't aged in the ten years since they've been in town. Using the classic technique of trying to break a girl's heart so she won't miss you as much when you're gone, Edward pushes Bella away, sending her into possibly the most melodramatic depression ever seen on film. You'd think the poor girl was trying to kick heroin.

After she gets over the loss of Edward and comes out of her house again, Bella finds herself drawn to the newly-chiseled Jacob Black (Taylor Lautner). Of course, Bella can't meet a nice, normal young man and seems destined to only draw the attention of supernatural creatures, as evidenced by the discovery that Jake is a werewolf. The wolves signed a treaty with the vampire years ago, keeping the peace in this quiet town and that pact is threatened by the new love triangle.

The love story in "New Moon" never really gains traction as the three characters aren't on-screen together until the final act, which switches focus overseas and turns into something more in common with B-movies in the genre with vampire leaders and fantastic cameos from Michael Sheen and Dakota Fanning. Sadly, the inclusion of Sheen and Fanning late in the piece only shines a spotlight on how little character, depth, or acting there has been in the film until that point.



Kristen Stewart and Robert Pattinson star in *The Twilight Saga: New Moon*.

Photo credit: Kimberley French and Summit

I've liked Stewart before, especially in the highly underrated "Adventureland" from earlier this year, but she's simply bad here. Awful dialogue by Melissa Rosenberg doesn't help but I'm confused as to why Stewart puts so little energy, passion, or relatable humanity into her performance. You can't tell the difference between her line readings of "I am sad" or "I am happy". When she breaks out of her Cullen-less depression, her demeanor barely changes. She's just dull.

And Pattinson is even worse. He mumbles incoherently and mistakes being hard to understand with being mysterious. Lautner does good work in the early "courting Bella" scenes but can't handle the drama of the final act.

Even with all of the acting problems, most of the blame for what sinks "New Moon" has to be placed at the feet of screenwriter Melissa Rosenberg. She has taken a pulpy, timeless plot (the film references "Romeo & Juliet") and played it deadly seriously and melodramatically without finding the true emotion of the piece. The 130-minute running time could have been trimmed by at least a half-hour if every line...wasn't...delivered...with such...false gravity.

The action sequences - including a few werewolf on vampire fights and a great sequence with Sheen and Fanning near the end - are significantly better than the first film and a few of the supporting performances have improved, allowing for a slight upgrade, but there was hope that "New Moon" could really deliver where "Twilight" fell short. I guess we'll have to wait for "The Twilight Saga: Eclipse" to turn this franchise around.

'The Twilight Saga: New Moon' stars Kristen Stewart, Robert Pattinson, Taylor Lautner, Billy Burke, Ashley Greene, Kellan Lutz, Anna Kendrick, Michael Sheen, and Dakota Fanning. It was written by Melissa Rosenberg and directed by Chris Weitz. It opens on November 20th, 2009. It is rated PG-13.



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