

## 'Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald' Goes Deeper into Harry Potter World

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on November 16, 2018 - 1:43pm

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Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – “Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald” is like the “Joey” of film franchises, a spinoff which only exists because of its tangential connections to a better (and more beloved) property. But since this is our only current filmed connection to the “wizarding world of Harry Potter,” it’ll have to do.

Taking place in the years before Harry Potter, the first film in the planned series – “Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them” – was content to noodle around a 1920’s New York City with noted creature enthusiast Newt Scamander (Eddie Redmayne). This second outing has much more narrative heavy lifting to do. It begins with Grindelwald, revealed at the end of the first film as portrayed by Johnny Depp, escaping from custody and taking up residence in Paris. He’s out to lead a master race of pureblood wizards to grasp absolute power and world domination.



Jude Law & Eddie Redmayne in 'Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald'

*Photo credit: Universal Pictures*

Johnny Depp as the central role in the franchise just isn't the force he once was. Gellert Grindelwald is also not the face of evil that Harry Potter's Voldemort was, despite having eyes of two different colors. Depp's performance is full of affectations that are more weird than anything else... not bad by any means, but not quite the light-up-the-screen quality he used to have. As for the character of Newt, he's more a collection of character traits than an actual character. Eddie Redmayne does his best, but he has precious little to grab onto, for example trying

to tell sometime love and aura Tina (Katherine Waterston) that she has the eyes of a salamander, and meaning that as a compliment.

Both Grindelwald and the younger version of Albus Dumbledore (Jude Law) are chasing after and trying to influence a troubled young wizard named Credence (Ezra Miller). He is revealed to have survived the first film and now hiding out in a circus freak show chasing after clues to his true identity. There's special effects galore, with all sorts of CGI creatures flying around, but there's precious little magic in any of it. It's great that movie magic has progressed to the point where anything author J.K. Rowling can dream up can be accomplished on screen... but when it's all rendered in the same kind of hyperactive CGI creations like the ones here, it becomes forgettable at best and dull at its worst, and the charms are strictly of the second hand variety, reminding us of something we liked a whole lot better.

The connections to Harry Potter are much more integral to this story as Newt is dispatched by a younger and still bearded headmaster Dumbledore to stop Grindelwald. There's a visit to Hogwarts academy, with Dumbledore frequently clashing with law and order forces in the magic community while training the next generation in the wizarding arts. Jude Law fits right in as this mentor, and will be a highlight for Harry Potter fans... and that slightly more integrated nature of the story may be enough to hold those the interests of those fans.



Johnny Depp in 'Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald'

Photo credit: Universal Pictures

And that certainly seemed to be the case in the screening I attended, along with a couple of reveals in the film that will prime those fans for the future. It should be mentioned that the Harry Potter series of films took a couple of installments to get going too, so there's hope for "Fantastic Beasts" ahead if they've get the right kind of filmmaking wizard behind the camera to lead the way.

*"Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald" opens everywhere in on November 16th, in IMAX and regular screenings. See local listings for IMAX theaters and show times. Featuring Eddie Redmayne, Katherine Waterston, Dan Fogler, Alison Sudol, Jude Law and Johnny Depp. Written by J.K. Rowling. Directed by David Yates. Rated "PG-13"*



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