

REVIEW

Second 'IT' drudges up dreadful disappointment

By Lathe Cobb
Staff reporter

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.”

That is the quote that most came to mind while watching the climatic sequence of “IT: Chapter Two,” the sequel and conclusion of the 2017 popular Stephen King novel adaptation.

In the scene, the surviving members of the Losers’ Club defeat a giant spider-legged Pennywise by shouting put-downs and insults at him. “You’re a fake,” cries one. “An imposter,” “You’re a bully,” shouts Academy Award nominee, Jessica Chastain.

The scene, one of the many climaxes in the film, is by far the most ridiculous scene in a film full of ridiculousness. It’s this silliness, combined with the handful of truly great scenes in the film, that make “IT: Chapter Two” a rollercoaster of an intellectual viewing experience and a slow kiddie ride of an entertaining one.

The only way to accurately describe a film of such contradictions, scenes of great subtext and maturity against scenes of forced humor and cringe-worthy romance, would be to call it messy.

And that it is: a messy, bloated piece of mass horror entertainment which only really engages its audience in select scenes.

For this reason, it’s difficult to make broad statements about the film. Still, there are a few that can be made.



First, the film’s most obvious, overarching flaw is its pacing. Scenes that nobody cares about drag on for too long, while scenes that engage and come closest to scaring us end abruptly, with not the faintest hint of a jump or gasp from the audience. For this reason and another, which I’ll get to later, the film very much fails as a horror film.

What it doesn’t totally fail at is being a character piece. The film has heart, in some places too much. It takes its time on each character, fleshing out their individual traumas and relationships with great affection and care.

These scenes have little to do with the horror aspect of the film,

and when the filmmakers do try to inject moments of character into the intense horror sequences, it seems, at best, forced, and, at worst, quite corny.

Bill Skarsgard’s Pennywise remains a delight to watch, but feels quite wasted here. Pennywise doesn’t feel like a personalized villain, although it’s quite clear that the filmmakers were trying very hard to make his relationship with each of the adult protagonists significant.

Despite these efforts, the titular monster feels only lightly utilized. He is not at the forefront of the story like he was in the first film. Rather he exists almost abstractly as the elusive thing

that our protagonists are sort of fighting against.

Pennywise does, however, quite stand out in one scene in which he lures a little girl at a baseball game under the bleachers and proceeds to use her insecurity and innocent goodness to get her close enough to consume. It’s the film’s best scene and hardest to watch, both due to the clear connotations the film is making to the tactics of real-life child predators.

The film does this to a lesser extent in its opening scene, which depicts a homophobic hate crime that ends with the first emergence of Pennywise. With these scenes, the film feels like it’s trying to be something more than just a Friday night horror film. But almost all of its other attempts feel light and short-sided.

Pennywise targets each of the members of the Losers’ Club for their fears, just as he began doing in the first film, but this film doesn’t fully commit to this. It deals with things like body shaming and homophobia with very delicate hands.

One can almost hear a conversation among the filmmakers, with one voice wanting to fully embrace Pennywise’s metaphorical connection to the real world monsters of our society – homophobia, misogyny, racism, body shaming – and the other voices, probably those of the studio, saying “Whoa now, let’s calm down. We don’t want to actually upset people with our movie about a giant clown who

eats children...”

This is the film’s most profound flaw. The horror genre was made to upset people. It has always been an outlet for storytellers to talk about the ugly parts of existence through the guise of mass-entertainment.

The greatest horror films of all time speak to the horrors of their society. “Rosemary’s Baby” is really about abortion. “The Texas Chain Saw Massacre” is about the immorality of the meat industry. “The Thing” is about the chilly paranoia of the Cold War.

“IT: Chapter Two” has big aspirations to be another one of the greats, the next modern classic. An alternate, bureaucracy-free version of this film could’ve been an epic condemnation of modern hate.

Domestic abuse, homophobia, body-shaming – it’s all in there, but the film fails as a horror film in its inability to fully commit to the exploration of this evil. Consequently, it feels unbalanced, full of potential, yet bloated with the cringe-worthy clichés of some of the worst large-scale horror films ever.

Despite some great casting, impressive and creative visuals and another classic performance from Skarsgard, “IT: Chapter Two” is a ridiculous, thematically confusing and occasionally great piece of mass entertainment. It is sure to be a disappointment to most everyone who sees it.

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But what is so unique about his directing style, and his movies in general, are the parallels of real-life consequences because of characters’ actions. In most movies, when the protagonist does a good deed, he is usually rewarded in the end – you know, the knight saving the

damsel in distress after he goes through the haunted woods and the cursed dungeon and all that fairytale nonsense.

Zahler throws the good deed candy jar out the window and introduces viewers to the real-life candy jar. The real-life candy jar is self-explanatory –

you can make the right decision, but that does not mean the stars are going to align and the world is going to throw a favor at you.

You see a lot of the real-life candy jar in “Bone Tomahawk” and not a lot of the good deed candy jar, but that is exactly what makes this film special.

With Halloween on the horizon, this film is the perfect kickstart to the spooky season. Even if this film may not appeal to all viewers, it will definitely get them talking.

If anything, “Bone Tomahawk” will leave you asking yourself if there are deranged

and carnal people still roaming around the deep corners of the world today. Just remember to watch this one on an empty stomach.

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