

Batman battles terrorist in thrilling trilogy finale

Written by Kam Williams , DVD Review



"The Dark Knight Rises" brings down the curtain on the brilliant Batman trilogy directed by Christopher Nolan and starring Christian Bale as the Caped Crusader. Each of the earlier episodes, "Batman Begins" (2005) and "The Dark Knight" (2008), earned a spot on this critic's annual Top Ten List, #s 9 and 1, respectively.

Given how the late Heath Ledger played The Joker to perfection, delivering an inspired, Oscar-winning, career performance in the previous installment, you knew it would be hard for Nolan to find as compelling a character for his highly-anticipated finale. And if "The Dark Knight Rises" does have a weakness, it lies in the fact that its primary villain pales in comparison. Otherwise, the movie measures up to franchise expectations, though its convoluted plot and 2¾ hours running time is likely to test the patience of younger kids.

The picture's point of departure is eight years after the end of the last adventure, when Batman selflessly accepted the blame for the untimely demise of District Attorney Harvey Dent (Aaron Eckhart). The broken, embittered vigilante has apparently kept a low profile over the interim, allowing the Gotham Police Department to fight crime on its own.

But that's only until the arrival in town of Bane (Tom Hardy), a card-carrying member of the association of assassins known as The League of Shadows. Although his speech is pretty much muffled by a Hannibal Lecter-like contraption affixed to his face, you don't need to understand his unintelligible mumblings to know that he's a maniacal menace. The masked terrorist is hell-bent on blowing up the city with a nuclear device and of course it isn't long before

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Commissioner Gordon (Gary Oldman) needs help handling the mayhem.

Meanwhile, Batman's alter-ego Bruce Wayne already has his hands full with Selina Kyle (Anne Hathaway), a cat burglar he catches snooping around his mansion. Fortunately, Wayne still has loyal assistants in his butler Alfred (Michael Caine) and weapons/vehicle/gadgetry specialist Lucius Fox (Morgan Freeman). Plus, he forges a new friendship with John Blake (Joseph-Gordon-Levitt), an idealist cop with excellent instincts who might be sidekick Robin should the series be spun off.

Outfitted with a state-of-the-art motorcycle and hovercraft, a revived Batman engages his evil adversary with an unbridled enthusiasm. And between purist Nolan's loyalty to 35mm film and live action stunts, what's served up onscreen proves to be nothing short of spectacular.

A tip of the cap, or should I say of the cape, to a terrific trilogy for the ages!

Very Good (3 stars)

Rated PG-13 for sensuality, profanity and intense violence.

Running time: 165 minutes

Distributor: Warner Brothers Home Entertainment Group

3-Disc Blu-ray/DVD Combo Pack Extras: The Batmobile documentary; Ending the Knight (The Making of The Dark Knight Rises); trailers; art galleries; The Journey of Bruce Wayne; and more.

To see a trailer for The Dark Knight Rises, visit: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g8evyE9TuYk>

To order a copy of The Dark Knight Rises 3-Disc Blu-ray/DVD Combo Pack, visit: <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/B004LWZWGK/ref=nosim/thslfofire-20>