

'Mockingjay 2' fitting end to trilogy



'The
Hunger
Games:
Mockingjay
Part 2'

4 out of 5
bagels

Rated: PG-13

By **Howie Nave**

I've been waiting for the fourth and final installment of this franchise (although I still consider it a trilogy with the last one broken into two parts) for so long that I was hoping it would end with an amazing climatic experience. Well, it almost got there, but maybe that was just me anticipating too much.

It does get there eventually and some of the special effects were mind-bending, yes, but I guess not all movie finales can live up to what one would hope for.

Still, seeing Katniss Everdeen (Jennifer Lawrence) shooting her arrows one last time was exhilarating. I'm bummed the story has come to a close.



Director Frances Lawrence has done a yeoman's job taking Suzanne Collins' post-apocalyptic series of books and turning the final, fourth installment into what will undoubtedly be one of the more successful box office conclusions to a franchise. And all along carrying that franchise has been Jennifer Lawrence who is virtually in every scene.

Katniss is still the reluctant leader of the rebellion on the war of Panem and wants to overtake the capital and kill President Snow (Donald Sutherland) but rebel organizer Alma Coin (Julianne Moore) wants to use her more as a media tool, the face, if you will, to rally the other districts to form one cohesive army to battle Snow's. Katniss may be the mockingjay, but she has other plans.

So much has transpired since Part 1, especially the death of Philip Seymour Hoffman who didn't live long enough to finish his role as the game master/public relations sidekick to Coin, Plutarch Heavensbee. It's kind of obvious when watching the movie and the filmmakers must have scrambled to use whatever footage was unused from Part 1 to utilize here in Part 2. The filmmakers were, however able to stretch his presence in select scenes and his final words were read in a letter through Woody Harrelson's character, Haymitch.

For diehard fans of Katniss hoping for a love angle to blossom the movie teases with this love triangle instead pitting Katniss, Peeta (Josh Hutcherson) and her old flame Gale (Liam Hemsworth) as a sort of throw away, threesome element that never really gets defined (which I'll leave at that when you ultimately go see the movie for yourself). Yes, Peeta is still a risk to the rebels after being tortured by Snow's thugs and

we don't know when he's going to snap at any given time. There are some new cast members, including Gwendoline Christie from "Game Of Thrones" (in an almost cameo role as a rebel commander). I enjoyed seeing the familiar faces such as soldier Boggs (Mahershala Ali from "House Of Cards" again, too briefly), Jeffrey Wright's Beetee, and Stanley Tucci's Caesar Flickerman who I wish was given more screen time as well.

In the end, "The Hunger Games: Mockingjay, Part 2" centers around Katniss and her drive to get to President Snow and as we all know the journey is the best part (be prepared to jump out of your seats when her band of rebels go underground). And what a journey it's been. When "The Hunger Games" opened back in 2012 it was directed by Gary Ross. There was little voice over narration with that one just you, as the filmgoer taking it all in as it happened with your own mind interpreting the scenes as they happened. When director Francis Lawrence took over the series starting with No. 2 (2013's "Catching Fire") he established this visual narrative and design that continued through all three of his other films. At least the narration is coming from Katniss, which kept my attention during some of the lag time (mainly at the beginning of this movie).

Don't get me wrong, I'd follow Lawrence in any movie she does and I know "The Hunger Games" franchise has done very well because of her. I mean, c'mon she won an Oscar for best actress in 2012's "Silver Linings Playbook" and played the character of Raven/Mystique in 2011's "X-Men: First Class" and last year's "X-Men: Days of Future Past" (my personal fav in that franchise) so yeah, Jennifer was the perfect casting choice as Katniss in this franchise. The last three have already garnered close to 2.5 billions dollars at the box office so how much do you wanna bet that the studio heads are already envisioning a prequel, huh?

"The Hunger Games: Mockingjay, Part 2" is rated PG-13 for intense sequences of violence and action, and for some thematic material and clocks in at 2 hours, 16 minutes.

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