

'IT Chapter Two': not as strong as chapter one, but still offers, thrills, chills

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Rating: «««« out of «««««

Running Time: 169 minutes

It has been two years since the release of *It*, an adaptation of Stephen King's 1986 novel. The film became a blockbuster and grossed more than \$700 million dollars worldwide on a relatively small budget. The follow-up arrives this week and is likely critic-proof, as those who went to the original picture will no doubt line up to see how it all plays out. Admittedly,

IT Chapter Two

isn't quite as effective as the previous entry, but it still features some entertaining moments and a finale that will satisfy horror fans.

It is 27 years after the supernatural child-devouring clown Pennywise (Bill Skarsgård) was defeated by a band of outcast children. In the years since, they all have gone their separate ways. But after strange events start up once again in Derry, the adult gang is called back to reunite against the evil force.

However, time, distance and supernatural factors have caused some of them to forget what they went through. And when they begin to recall events and find themselves in mortal danger, some are more inclined to leave town than revisit their childhood traumas. But as each is attacked once again, they all realize that they have little choice but to try and finish Pennywise off for good.

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This follow-up is a bit too lengthy for its own good, running at close to three hours. Additionally, there are extra flashbacks with the younger cast as the older members try to remember more of their past. Only this time, these earlier interactions aren't as urgent or threatening as the adventures depicted in the previous picture. It isn't as frightening a flick either, although the issues that make it less chilling are unavoidable.

While there's something inherently distressing about seeing a killer clown target, terrorize and devour innocent and fragile children, it's a slightly tougher sell to see sharper, more physically able adults face off against the same figure.

In fact, the filmmakers seem to acknowledge this and have their heroes wisecrack more often while being terrorized. As a result, this is actually a much funnier movie than its predecessor. In particular, Richie (Bill Hader) is given many opportunities to comment amusingly on the horrors being endured. Sharp observations delivered by this character hit the mark, although the film does occasionally try to inject humor from others at more awkward and inappropriate moments (particularly during a scene involving some black bile). Some of the stranger interjections hurt the picture, resulting in a lower number of jolts and jumps.

Besides Richie, other standout characters in the piece include the adult Bill (James McAvoy), Beverly (Jessica Chastain) and Ben (Jay Ryan), who are all still suffering from various neuroses and unfinished business that, even decades later, have yet to be resolved. They all acquit themselves well, even selling a few ruminations about the past and a couple of borderline corny moments involving personal relationships. These fine actors manage to pull it off and keep the drama afloat.

And although this sequel isn't as scary, there are a few chills to be had. There is a scene involving the clown enticing a youngster under a bleacher stand that is eerie. And the movie includes excellent visuals such as a group member facing off against a violent Paul Bunyan statue, and another confrontation between a character and Pennywise inside a carnival funhouse. And those who remember the original miniseries based on the book, will find the climax to be far more efficiently and excitingly handled in this film adaptation.

Most who take in the movie will admit that it takes a bit of time for the story to get up to speed and it has more difficulty sustaining tension, but these problems may be a result of following the source material too closely. While it could stand to be trimmed and doesn't always send chills down the spine, it's engaging and generally works. *IT Chapter Two* doesn't read like a

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masterpiece, but still provides enough thrills to finish off the horror epic effectively.

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