

‘Jurassic World Dominion’ has some fun but lacks bite

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Rating: <<<

out of <<<<<<

Running Time: 146 minutes

This feature from Universal Pictures will be released at movie theaters on June 10.

In 2015, Universal Pictures released “Jurassic World,” a lively and entertaining sequel to the original “Jurassic Park” franchise that managed to elaborate on and create drama from a working and busy island theme park filled with living dinosaurs. The weaker 2018 follow-up introduced a black market involving rare giant reptiles, as well as human cloning. “Jurassic World Dominion” continues the focus on the latter thread. It claims to be the sixth and final chapter in the series, tying up loose ends and bringing back characters from the original trilogy. This film tries to squeeze in too many characters and subplots and suffers greatly for it, although it does deliver a few exciting moments along the way.

In the years since the last installment, dinosaurs have spread across the world. Owen Grady (Chris Pratt) and Claire Dearing (Bryce Dallas Howard) have gone off-the-grid to raise human

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clone Maisie Lockwood (Isabella Sermon). When bounty hunters arrive and kidnap the teen, her adopted parents go on a globe-trotting mission to find her. In the meantime, Dr. Eillie Sattler (Laura Dern) begins investigating a series of attacks involving enormous locusts that have been wiping out crops across the U.S. She approaches paleontologist Dr. Alan Grant (Sam Neill) to assist her in learning who engineered the insects. The trail heats up when Dr. Ian Malcolm (Jeff Goldblum) invites the pair to an Italian research facility and dinosaur sanctuary run by Biosyn Genetics CEO Dr. Lewis Dodgson (Campbell Scott).

Essentially, the first half of the film is split into two different storylines. Time is spent reminding viewers of previous events, playing catch up with the many leads and where their lives have taken them, as well as introducing a few new characters like pilot Kayla Watts (DeWanda Wise) and Biosyn employee Ramsay Cole (Mamoudou Athie) into the mix. Despite the fast-cutting between storylines and attempts to keep things moving rapidly, it's all surprisingly clunky and ineffective. Much of the dialogue consists of awkwardly blunt exposition and attempts at humorous witticisms that just don't land.

Additionally, placing the dinosaurs in real world environments doesn't always have the same awe-inspiring effect. One bit with a brachiosaurus in a lumber mill is impressive, but other scenes involving carnivorous beasts in local woods end up looking silly and less-than-threatening. It's also disappointing that the story seemingly focuses as much on the locust problem as the dinosaurs. Admittedly, these grasshoppers are doing horrible things and are oddly oversized, but they aren't as dangerous or physically menacing as the dinos, lessening the tension.

Still, as the story progresses and we encounter more raptors and other prehistoric beasts, there are a few exciting moments. One highlight involves jaws being closed around a steel ladder, and another details one character being pursued into a large waterhole by a threatening creature. And things do hit their stride when the two major plots converge and the characters all come together in the sanctuary. Goldblum in particular gets a chance to deliver some amusing lines – one crack about a promise made to a dinosaur is genuinely funny.

Personally, this reviewer thinks that a film about the world being overrun with dinosaurs and humanity dealing with no longer being the dominant species is dynamic. While enjoyable in spurts, this isn't that movie. It introduces some of these ideas, but doesn't really want to deal with them or debate it in a dynamic manner. In fact, the characters merely state that we should all just learn to coexist happily (which does come across as strange, given that the story continually makes reference to several dinos as being the ultimate apex predator and, one assumes, an invasive species).

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Instead, “Jurassic World Dominion” haphazardly jumps around between subplots and tries to juggle too many elements to truly be effective. As a series finale it doesn’t completely muddle things and is fun enough if you’re a forgiving viewer, but one can’t help but find it lacking bite, thought-provoking observations, or even the sense of wonder and spectacle as in some of the previous chapters.

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