

THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE:

I suppose that movies we see as young children leave an indelible impression on us. We are in awe, no matter what others think of them. I remember seeing "Sleeping Beauty" in the theater and was mesmerized. It was magical. It featured an evil witch.

The young who see "The Chronicles of Narnia" with its special effects, wicked White Witch, and intriguing effects and creatures, might feel the same. But for me, I found "The Chronicles of Narnia" somewhat of a disappointment.

The characters don't have much empathy, the four young protagonists are non-heroes, and the story doesn't really work, and even the special effects from Lucasfilm Productions don't always work.

On no level does it match the complete mythological quality of the "Harry Potter" series or the complexity and completely different world of "The Lord of the Rings" series. Yes, different strokes for different folks... Nonetheless...I felt manipulated...and bored.

The story takes place in 1940s England, where the onslaught of the Nazi bombing of London is creating fear and the need for escape. Four young siblings are sent to a majestic country mansion. The kids are all prim and proper.

While playing hide-and-seek, the youngest Lucy Pevensie (played by Georgie Henley) enters a room that has a closet. There, she discovers a wardrobe that allows her to enter a magical portal to a frozen and enchanting world of beavers, lions, centaurs, satyrs and a deceiving witch.

Her oldest brother Peter (played by William Moseley), older sister Susan (played by Anna Popplewell, and other brother Edmund (played by Skandar Keynes) initially make fun of her as she re-enters the room with the closet and tells her siblings about her adventure with a Mr. Tumnus. He explains to her that he is a "faun" (satyr).

While looking for Lucy, Edmund enters the portal and meets the White Witch played in a deliciously evil way by Tilda Swinton. Her white, expressionless face is an embodiment of pure evil. I found her character the best part of the film. She promises to make him a prince in her castle. But, that is only a ruse to capture his family.

The kids have unwittingly entered a world where a prophecy will lead them to their demise or triumph. Years before, the prophecy dictated that four humans (two brothers and two sisters) would one-day come to deliver Narnia from control of the White Witch.

The four youths are led from the ravages of the White Witch and her hungry wolves and other otherworldly figures by Mr. Beaver (voice of Roy Winstone) and Mrs. Beaver (voice of Dawn French) through a mysterious land to meet up with the "lion king" Aslan (voice of Liam Neeson).

Again, the "bad" guys are gangly and ugly while the good guys are majestic and beautiful. Will this stereotype ever be broken?

Aslan gives up his life to save Edmund from the witch. In this land, a traitor cannot go back. Edmund became a traitor to his family by siding with the witch, and now, only Aslan's sacrifice for his sin will spare Edmund.

An obligatory giant battle ensues with George Lucas's CGI in full swing.

The director was Andrew Adamson, and the screenplay to C. S. Lewis novel was adapted for the screen by Ann Peacock, Andrew Adamson, Christopher Markus and Stephen McFeely. Any time a screenplay that has more than two authors usually is a sign for trouble. And, this is no exception.

I also found the chemistry between the kids not present. Lucy is best, followed by Edmund. The older two, Peter and Susan, are bland. Yes, they are kids, nonetheless...

It's not that this is a bad movie, but it doesn't really engage a viewer either. Young kids will find it a masterpiece, older kids, including myself, will say "been there, done that."

139 Minutes

MPAA Rating: PG (for battle sequences and frightening moments).

Rating: C+