

CINEMA CORNER

By: Donna Morgana

Movie: Jungle Cruise
Rate: PG-13 / Ages: 8-Adult
Budget: \$200 Million
Release: July 30, 2021
Director: Jaume Collet-Serra - Spanish-American film Director and Producer
Actors: Dwayne (The Rock) Johnson, Emily Blunt, Jack Whitehall, Jesse Plemons

What started decades ago as an original ride at Disneyland, where a small riverboat takes a group of travelers through a jungle filled with dangerous animals and reptiles, is now a great movie of adventure to the Amazon without needing a passport.

SUMMARY: In the 16th century, Spanish conquistadors travel to South America in search of the Tears of the Moon, a mythical tree whose petals can cure any illness, heal injuries, and lift any curse. When the villagers refuse to reveal the location of the tree, the conquistadors destroy the village, but as punishment, the villagers curse them, and they are forever bound in the jungle and become mythical vile warriors who are hidden in a cave wallowing in their misery.

In 1916, Frank Wolff (Dwayne Johnson) is a river boat captain on the Amazon River. He is hired by the British scientist Dr. Lily Houghton (Emily Blunt) and her brother MacGregor (Jack Whitehall) to travel into the jungle to find the Tears of the Moon. Along the way, they battle a submarine lead by rogue Germans, as well as the undead conquistadors that have a history with Frank, and battle is on who will find the tree first to get the lifesaving petals - Tears of the Moon.

The villains aren't the natives, but the undead cursed conquistadors who were released from the cave by the German Commander and are still on a quest to raid the tree to bring them back to who they once were.

When the tree is finally discovered, they all merge at the same place fighting to capture the prize.

ANALYSIS: The setting for this movie is a cross between Indiana Jones and the Pirates of the Caribbean. The plot includes a touch of legends, myths, fables, and mystery. Unpredictable turns of the characters and secret underwater passageways provide a modern-day swashbuckler element with a legendary mythical essence.

This original story encapsulates three different subplots to find the sacred petals. One is for good (Dr. Lily) to help mankind with healing medicine vs evil German Commander (Jesse Plemons) for self-profit and world control and the unfinished business of the 16th century conquistadors. The twists and turns to try and snub out the good guys keeps danger and peril at the forefront.

Note: Even though this movie is rated PG-13 (movies that are regarded to be appropriate for older children, but not younger ones), it subtly addresses the love preference of the brother character which has nothing to do with the plot but is artfully scripted.

CREATIVE ELEMENTS: The "feel it" surround sound keeps this high adventure story pushing fast using quick edits and fun dialogue sprinkled with one-liners. The high-tech graphics of explosions, animals and outrageous stunts are not real but true to Disney style, they are very, very good.

They spared no expense on wardrobe. Using fabulous colors and designs along with accurate period fashions brings an authenticity to all scenes.

The script provides incredible feats, breathtaking underwater action, and authentic jungle scenes. The talents of amazing cinematographers and an army of digital artists and tech experts bring this story to life.

Getting the biggest movie star in the USA, Dwayne Johnson, to play the light-hearted boat captain has the audience spellbound. Adding the no nonsense attitude of the lady British scientist gives the banter between the two leading characters an earthy sophistication that is enjoyed by all.

Also in the cast is the award-winning Paul Giamatti (Harbormaster) and Jesse Plemons (German Captain) from the TV show "Friday Night Lights".

AS I SEE IT: This movie should be experienced on the big screen to witness the true adventure. It provides a story including good vs evil, an unpredictable plot, lighthearted writing, and plenty of action. An outstanding score compliments the dramatic scenes and supports the high-level action. Even the ending credits were created with care using colorfully drawn watercolor illustrations prove to be very captivating.

A lot of work went into this. The idea for this movie began in 2015 and it took 6 years of planning, writing, coordination, filming and editing to bring this story from paper to a visual fantasy that we all can love. It's truly a movie vacation. Go see it!

MORGANA RATE:

Genre: Adventure/Live Action Mix
Family Friendly MMMMM
Action: MMMMM
Violence: MMMM^{1/2} (Mild / Mythical Creatures)
Profanity: 0
Recommend: MMMMM