

'Dark Knight' Finale Rises to The Occasion

The Dark Knight Rises is an epic and thrilling finale to Christopher Nolan's Batman trilogy—following the gritty and dark pedigree of its predecessors.

One of the most anticipated and hyped films of the year, *The Dark Knight Rises* opens during a time of relative calm for Gotham City. It has been eight years since Batman (Christian Bale) vanished into the night, turning, in that instant, from hero to fugitive.

Yes, Batman saved Gotham in *The Dark Knight*, but he could not save himself. Ultimately, the blame for Harvey Dent's crimes rested on his shoulders—however unjust that may have been. Additionally, in assuming the blame for the death of the slain district attorney, Bruce Wayne's alter ego sacrificed everything for what he and Commissioner Gordon (Gary Oldman) both hoped was the greater good.

For a time, the lie worked. Criminal activity in Gotham City was crushed under the weight of the anti-crime Dent Act, convincing the caped crusader that Gotham was safe and Wayne doesn't have to wear the batsuit again. But with that revelation comes a personal price—what cause remains, if any, to give the billionaire something to live for?

Everything changes with the arrival of a cunning cat burglar, Selina Kyle (Anne Hathaway) whose mysterious personal agenda piques the interest of Wayne. Coincidentally, and far more dangerous however, is the emergence of Bane (Tom Hardy)—a masked terrorist whose ruthless plans prove to be too much for Gordon to handle.

Batman must break his eight-year exile and return to defeat Bane from fulfilling his devious plan. But after enduring his

hermit-like exile, broken and lost in spirit, even if Wayne dons the cape and cowl again, can he realistically be any match for the evil and powerful Bane?

Victory is not a given for the masked man, but I won't give any spoilers. But I will say, *Wow, what a movie!*—which I inadvertently shouted during the IMAX screening. So much for decorum, but everyone else was shouting too.

Did I see the same movie as the people who gave it bad reviews? I had read several online reviews, and I was worried that *The Dark Knight Rises* was going to be somewhat of a letdown. Hardly.

When I go to see a movie to review, I usually take four or five pages of notes. This time I filled half a page because I didn't have time to write! A couple of occasions, I realized that I had been holding my breath—which is so not me. Did the film seem like two hours and 48 minutes? Not in the least.

Walking out afterwards, I talked to four people, both men and women, about their reactions. None could come up with anything negative to say about *The Dark Knight Rises*. There were smiles all around. Gushing praise. People loved it. Enough said.

Far from a faith-based flick, the movie offers some teachable moments for Christians. Wayne sees more in Kyle than she sees in herself. How many times have you risen to meet the heights of what others see in you? There is also a moment when a leader loses his courage and hides from the darkness that pervades Gotham. It's not easy to be in leadership when there is but a very faint glimmer of hope to hold onto.

One of my favorite life lessons depicted is learning how to merge serving others with your personal life. Some people burn themselves out by serving to the point of losing their own identity. Happiness turns to resentment or apathy. Thinking of your own needs is not selfish, if it's in balance.

The anti-crime Dent Act was a bad law based on a lie. Even if it's meant for good, a lie is still a lie. Bane is pure evil—think the calmness of Hannibal Lecter meets the cold, dark evil of Darth Vader. I like movies where the lines between evil and good are clearly defined.

This is an incredible movie. Don't let any snooty, pessimistic reviewer dash your hopes that you won't like it. Sure, this is not *Marvel's The Avengers*, but why should it be? This story is not about people with mythical superpowers. Rather, it delves into the complex nature of humans—showing that the choice to make a difference is ours alone.

Content Watch: Rated PG-13 for intense sequences of violence and action, some sensuality and language, *The Dark Knight Rises* is not a movie for young children, and parents should exercise strong caution with their tweens because of its intensity and mature content. The violence is pervasive—lots of hand-to-hand fighting, but not a lot of blood. Despite the incredible evil that Bane exudes, he is not offensive. There is a love scene that shows two characters, assumed nude, kissing under the covers. As for language, there was a B-bomb directed at a woman by a bad guy. Other than that, the language was cleaner than the large majority of primetime TV shows.

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