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# Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest

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## Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest

\*\*\* 1/2 (out of five)

As a sequel to *The Curse of the Black Pearl*, *Dead Man's Chest* is a success in many ways. Gore Verbinski's second installment in the *Pirates of the Caribbean* series is made on a bigger scale of creative concept, and the results show in this film brimming with stunning visuals. Dark prisons of weathered rock that soar from crashing seas into the blue-black of night, undead pirates whose gruesome part human, part sea fauna faces snarl out at the audience, and mythic monsters of terrible proportion await, grasping our attention as we sail along with this fun-filled adventure.

But while the thrills in *Dead Man's Chest* crest higher than those in the first film, the weaknesses are also more pronounced. Specifically, the complimentary air of silliness that produced nicely understated humor in *The Curse of the Black Pearl* is now overblown at times. For example, in one early scene our beloved Jack Sparrow (Captain, that is) happens to be running from his own roasting with a large bamboo rod tied to his back. As a contingent of hungry island natives chase after him, Jack escapes capture by somehow performing an inverted front flip pole vault, which amazingly lands him on the other side of a giant chasm. Fans of *Cirque de Soleil* might disagree, but I thought the entire concept was ridiculous, and it made me stop to question how much wackiness I was in for.

Fortunately, the evolving circumstances of returning characters and the introduction of creative new ones keep *Pirates of the Caribbean* from running aground. As the legendary Davy Jones (played by Bill Nighy of *Underworld*) seeks to collect on a grim debt Jack owes him, Sparrow's hasty effort to save himself once again places Will and Elizabeth in harm's way, and in the irresolute end it seems only a concerted effort between old foes will rescue Jack from the bowels of destruction. Yes, for those who aren't aware, it's true: A third and final picture (*Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End*) is forthcoming in the summer of 2007, meaning *Dead Man's Chest* will leave you hanging!

It's worth mentioning that the production team has done moviegoers a great service by securing the services of the director, writers, and more than ten major cast members from the first film—no small achievement in this age of conflicting schedules. The presence of so much original creative talent has thusfar yielded the continuity of expression more commonly found in adapted film series, such as *Harry Potter* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Indeed, *Pirates of the Caribbean* fans will find much to like in *Dead Man's Chest*, and much to anticipate. And while this film doesn't stand alone as well as its predecessor, it more than adequately sets the scene for a grand finale.

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