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Tim Burton, Johnny Depp and a Vampire Soap Opera - Oh My!

By Derek Zemrak



Photo provided

"Dark Shadows" is Hollywood's latest attempt to take a popular television series and bring it to the big screen. This was a gothic soap opera that ran on TV from 1966 to 1971, with a total of 1,225 episodes. It is interesting to note that originally "Dark Shadows" did not have a vampire story line until Barnabas Collins was introduced as one in 1967. The ratings skyrocketed!

Fast-forward to 2012: What is Academy Award-nominated director Tim Burton's (Beetlejuice, Edward Scissorhands) interpretation of the vampire soap opera? A comedy! Burton has stated that he was a big fan of the television series, running home each day from school to catch the new episode. Burton would have been eight at the time and I guess at that age, he found "Dark Shadows" a comedy. Burton cast his favorite; three-time Oscar nominee Johnny Depp (Pirates of the Caribbean, Ed Wood) as the lead, Barnabas Collins, who is solid as the sexy vampire. Depp can play any role offered to him; he is one of the best actors of our generation and way overdue to receive an Oscar! The ensemble cast includes the beautiful, three-time Oscar nominee Michelle Pfeiffer (Dangerous Liaisons) as

Elizabeth Collins Stoddard; the striking Eva Green (Casino Royale) as Collins' former girlfriend - a witch who cast a spell on him years ago; and Oscar Nominee Jackie Earle Haley (Little Children) as the quirky caretaker Willie Loomis. I am not sure if Burton also ran home from school to watch "The Addams Family" but Dark Shadows was not a comedy. The film version in my mind is more of a representation of "The Addams Family;" even Barnabas has a little Morticia Addams in him.

It is always an experience to see a Tim Burton film, which needs to be seen on the big screen, as he is the master of creative, bizarre cinematography. No one has his "eye." The set decorations and 1970s period piece costumes receive big kudos! "Dark Shadows" is a highly entertaining film with some graphic vampire killings. Anyone who was a true fan of the television series will be disappointed. The rest of us will find it an enjoyable 113 minutes!

Derek Zemrak is a Film Critic, Film Producer and Founder of the California Independent Film Festival. You can follow Derek on Twitter @zemrak for the latest Hollywood news.

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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