

## Sherlock Holmes

### **Sherlock Holmes movie review.**

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Sherlock Holmes movie poster.

While I have of course been aware of the existence of the Sherlock Holmes character, I can't say I've been a big Sherlock Holmes fan. I have never read any of the Arthur Conan Doyle books, and I haven't watched any of the old movies, many starring Basil Rathbone as Holmes. I started to watch *The Hound of the Baskervilles* once when I was a kid, but got bored. My primary experience in regard to Holmes on celluloid was the 1985 Barry Levinson movie, *Young Sherlock Holmes*. This movie, though somewhat unremarkable overall, did feature a landmark moment in the world of moviemaking. It contained the first CGI character in a feature film, the Stained Glass Knight, and he was by far the best part of the movie.

Now we have *Sherlock Holmes*, starring Robert Downey, Jr. as the title character and Jude Law as Dr. Watson. The characters differ from previous film versions. This incarnation of Watson, previously portrayed as a portly professorial type, is more in keeping with the Watson of the books, or so I'm told by a friend who has read them. Law's Watson is more soldierly and dashing, and good in a fight. Holmes is presented as a major eccentric, brilliant but also appearing to be on the brink of insanity. He's a good fighter, too, which is a good thing because there are plenty of fights in this movie. Several are between Holmes and a hulking giant named Dredger (Robert Maillet). Their repeated scraps reminded me of the ongoing fights between Roger Moore and 7-foot-tall Richard Kiel as James Bond and Jaws, respectively, in *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1977). Ah Jaws...he remains one of my all-time favorite villains. He is the only James Bond villain that, because of his popularity with the fans, was brought back for a second Bond movie. Too bad the second one was the mostly dull *Moonraker* (1979).

The abundance of fighting in *Sherlock Holmes* is not surprising considering the movie is directed by Guy Ritchie. Fight scenes have been a staple ingredient in all the Ritchie movies I've seen. Admittedly, I've only seen three. I really liked his first one, *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (1998). I found his next film, *Snatch*, to be a bit of a rehash, and I grew weary trying to understand what Brad Pitt was saying due to his character's mostly unintelligible accent. Ritchie has made six films since *Snatch* in 2000, with *RocknRolla* (2008) his most recent before *Sherlock Holmes*. I never got around to seeing any of his others.

The plot of *Sherlock Holmes* reminded me a bit of *Young Sherlock Holmes*, in that a cult figures prominently in the story. The murderous leader of said cult, the glowering Lord Blackwood (Mark Strong), is introduced as he's about to sacrifice a young woman on an altar, surrounded by a robed and hooded throng. I wonder who made their robes. Does each cultist make his or her own? They all look so similar...maybe there's a little old lady in a cell somewhere who is forced to attend to the cult's sewing needs.

Anyway, Holmes and Watson sneak onto the scene and tangle with some cultists before thwarting Blackwood's attempted sacrifice. The hooded masses scatter and Blackwood is apprehended and imprisoned. He is sentenced to hang for five previous murders, and he does indeed keep his date with the gallows. Soon after, however, a shaken cemetery worker swears he has seen Blackwood emerging from his crypt, and soon after a new series of murders begins. Is Blackwood indeed back from the dead, and if so, what exactly is he up to? Complicating matters is the arrival of Holmes' one true love, Irene Adler (Rachel McAdams), who not only wants to hire Holmes but who also appears to be in cahoots with a mysterious character wreathed in shadow. Who is this person, and what does he want? With plenty of mysteries for Holmes to solve, he still has time to insult Watson's fiancé, who he resents for "stealing" roommate Watson from him, and repeatedly knock out his bulldog that he uses as a guinea pig when testing various chemical reactions.

I liked *Sherlock Holmes*. I didn't love it, but I liked it a lot. Robert Downey, Jr. was excellent, and his version of Holmes as a braniac brawler of a sleuth was consistently fun to watch. Downey is now at the forefront of two successful movie series: this one and *Iron Man* (a trailer for *Iron Man 2* was shown before *Sherlock Holmes* -- go Mickey Rourke!). I think it's safe to say we're looking at a new tentpole in *Sherlock Holmes*, because as of this writing it has raked in nearly \$147 million. It's number two at the box office this season, after *Avatar*, which has so far made \$374 million, making it the twelfth most profitable movie in history. A *Sherlock Holmes* sequel is reportedly already in development. Two tentpoles ain't bad for a star that not long ago was spiraling down a pretty dark path, indeed ("tentpole" is a term used to describe a blockbuster movie series, such as the *Harry Potter* movies). It's great to see how Downey has bounced back with so much success.

I've liked him ever since he co-starred opposite Rodney Dangerfield in Back to School (1986).

Guy Ritchie's films often exhibit a unique Ritchie-esque grittiness, and Sherlock Holmes is no different. Victorian London is presented in all its grimy glory, and the cinematography and special effects are top-notch. The music added much to my enjoyment, primarily because Irish folk music was used. If you see the movie, stay for the end credits -- they're unique and interesting, just like the rest of Sherlock Holmes.

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