

LATEST FILMS

The Golden Compass

REVIEWED BY DNA SMITH
Special to Florida Weekly

Running Time: 1 hour 53 minutes
MPAA rating: PG-13

GRADE: D



If it's the holiday season, that means another epic film featuring a little person with an English accent on a magical adventure. This year's offering is "The Golden Compass," a lush, beautifully art directed fantasy that is long on exposition and sadly short on heart.

I really wanted to like this movie. It has zeppelins and polar bears and Nicole Kidman wearing hot outfits. How could it fail?

And yet, fail it does.

The film is based on a series of popular books by Philip Pullman, and director Chris Wietz ("American Pie") makes the same mistake Chris Columbus made with the first Harry Potter film: He spends so much time trying to remain faithful to the narrative of the books that he crushes the magical spirit that made the books so entertaining.

So much time in "The Golden Compass" is spent explaining the plot and backstory that I really didn't have time to care about the characters because I was trying to remember what was going on and who was who. In fact,

I'm hard-pressed to explain the plot to you because I'm still not sure what the movie was about. It has something to do with magical dust that'll allow people to travel to parallel universes and an orthodox institution called the Magesterium that's trying to suppress knowledge of it. I'm guessing this is an allegory of how organized religion tries to stifle scientific inquiry.

The last half hour of the movie is a lot of fun because of the bear fights, but by the time you get that far, you'll probably have fallen asleep or left the theater.

I can't really recommend "The Golden Compass," because I can't figure out who would want to see it. It's too confusing for kids to keep up with; and too juvenile and convoluted for adults. ■

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