

TELEVISION PROGRAMMING FOR MAY 28-JUNE 3, 2011

The Journal TVview



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Jewel, DioGuardi mentor songwriters on 'Platinum Hit'

Jewel (left) and Kara DioGuardi serve as judges and mentors on "Platinum Hit," premiering Monday on Bravo.

See Page 4 for more details.

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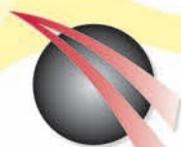
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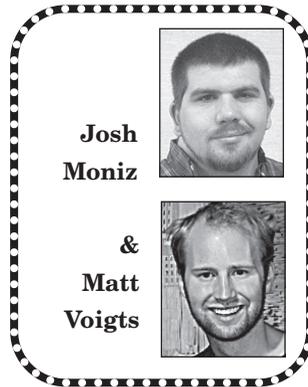
Double Take: 'Pirates of the Caribbean: On Strange Tides'

Josh: "Pirates" could be on the road to recovery; Matt: Not near strange enough

Josh: "Pirates of the Caribbean: On Strange Tides," has a number of flaws, but it also has some great moments that gives me hope that the franchise is on the rebound.

Prior to "Strange Tides," the series has been on a decline. The first film was iconic, the second was fun and the third was sloppy. This film bring the quality back up because it focuses on the basics: Captain Jack and quirky characters pursuing the treasure of the week through monsters and magic traps.

This voyage of the Black Pearl set sail without it's distinctive director Gore Verbinski, and was instead helmed by "all right" director Rob Marshall (best known for "Chicago"). I suspect most of the consistency and quality comes from the writers, Ted Elliot and Terry Rossio, sticking with the series. They do a killer job of taking goofy concepts, like pirates or mermaids, and making them utterly engaging. I think they are best in this "questing for an item" format, and the reduced quality in "Pirates 2 and 3" comes from producers forcing them to stuff in too many



**Josh
Moniz**
&
**Matt
Voigts**

extra elements for an "epic" feel. In "Pirates 3" alone, there are four to five subplots that aren't given enough time to go anywhere, but would have been fun as their own movie.

The movie's strength is the first 45 minutes of the film, where all the characters are being introduced in a mad rush. The pacing is great and all the actors are clearly having fun. This really gets you into the same mood you felt with the first film.

The film shines with the monsters and magic. It's unbelievably refreshing to see the supernatural-action genre handled well, especially after how terrible "Priest" was.

The mermaids were particularly good. I'll admit, I initially thought it would be stupid. I've always considered mermaids a hackney myth. But, the use of them as creepy, vicious sea monsters that make sharks look humble was inspired.

It's really important for "quest" movies like this to have genuinely scary bad guys or monsters. For exam-



Captain Jack tries desperately to push the franchise back out to sea.

ple, the original "Clash of the Titans" was such a treasured movie because they made Medusa seem really dangerous. An actually threatening foe allows you to care about the danger to the protagonist.

On the bad side, I think some of the film was underdeveloped. The preacher's sub-plot need more development for you to care. Also, I was underwhelmed by Ian McShane's Blackbeard. He had a couple of interesting minutes, but after that he really doesn't do a whole lot. Also, the rest of film after the first 45 minutes lacked pacing.

Matt: While the pacing slowed to a shrug and the plot got murky in the second and third "Pirates" movies, they did transmit the original's playful energy into visuals that ran into full-sail insanity. "At World's End" may have been a failure, but it did make you marvel at

just how a major studio – let alone Disney – allowed it to be made and personally, I'd rather watch a grand failure than a competent mediocrity.

Despite the title "On Stranger Tides," there's nothing inside anywhere near as weird or ambitious as "At World's End," something especially disappointing given that its dumbed down from what I hear is a highly entertaining Tim Powers novel.

As a supporting character, Jack Sparrow was a fun distraction. As the protagonist in "On Stranger Tides," he's a character development black hole. He doesn't learn anything; he doesn't end the movie appreciably different than when he began it; we don't find out anything essential or surprising about

his past, present, or future; and every moment the movie spends on his mildly amusing antics is time it could have spent better exploring its other characters, most all of whom remain underdeveloped to the point that it's difficult to emotionally invest in their fates.

Take the mermaid assault scene, in which Blackbeard's crew takes to rowboats at night to try to capture the seductive she-fish. The scene emphasizes atmosphere and ambiguity, creating tension by taking time to set the scene, keeping the lighting eerie, the characters vulnerable, and by withholding (and slowly revealing) the precise danger of the situation. It is a gorgeous, tense and effective sequence, and it is almost entirely devoid of Jack Sparrow. Until he sashays in at the end to save the day with a very large, very arbitrary, very predictable explosion.

Josh: One side note that irks me, and it happens with a lot of films with several sequels, is the habit of making throw-away jokes or sequences into the films' mythology. The instance here is the return of Keith Richards as Captain Jack's father. It was a kind-of funny joke in "At World's End," because Johnny Depp based his mannerisms off of Richards. However, when he comes back, it bugs me because it takes you out of the film. Telling the same joke again doesn't mean it's a funny as the first time.

Matt: I do have to give credit to the actors – Geoffrey Rush is great, as always, as Barbossa, and Ian McShane is a suitably threatening Blackbeard, even if – as Josh wrote – both aren't given much to do by the plot. In fact, no one's given much to do by the plot. All contingencies chasing the Fountain of Youth remain out of direct conflict with each other until the film's climax. The middle of the film is mostly sailing, interrupted by clunky exposition that reveals predictable backstory and one very awesome mermaid frenzy.

Josh: 7/10, Matt: 4/10

Synopsis:

Captain Jack Sparrow is on another adventure in search of the Fountain of Youth. Also chasing the Fountain is Blackbeard the Pirate, a mysterious Spanish crew, and the English government, led by Captain Barbossa, now working as a privateer. Along the way, Jack must battle zombies, blood-thirsty mermaids and ancient magic – as well as confront his feelings for an old flame.

Starring: Johnny Depp, Penelope Cruz, Geoffrey Rush, Ian McShane and Kevin McNally
Director: Rob Marshall
Writers: Ted Elliot and Terry Rossio

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