

"You Cannot Contain What You Are"

Just saw "Glass". This 19 years in the making conclusion to the "Easttrail 177 trilogy"("Unbreakable", "Split", "Glass") is directed by the one and only M. Night Shyamalan("The Sixth Sense", "Unbreakable", "Split"). The film stars Bruce Willis, James McAvoy, Samuel L. Jackson, Anya Taylor-Joy, Sarah Paulson, Spencer Treat Clark, Charlayne Woodard, Luke Kirby and Adam David Thompson.

When it comes to the films of M. Night Shyamalan, he's very hit or miss for me. It wasn't until the last few years that I actually started watching his filmography. "The Sixth Sense" is an instant horror classic. "Unbreakable" still stands as my favorite film of his. "Signs" was moody and intriguing up until that ridiculously stupid ending. I haven't seen either "The Village" or "Lady In The Water" but both received very mixed reviews upon release. I had the absolute misfortune of watching the dumpster fire known as "The Last Airbender" in theaters. "The Happening" is beyond dumb on every level and "After Earth" was just straight up painful to sit through. Then Shyamalan went back to the basics with the vastly underrated horror gem "The Visit" and followed that up with the hugely successful return to form, "Split". Now, that brings us to "Glass". A film 19 years in the making. Was it worth the incredibly long wait?

In my opinion, YES, for the most part I think it was. This was a very CONFLICTING film for me. Having said that, I greatly respect what Shyamalan did here. He took risks that superhero movies don't take these days. He didn't play it safe. Instead he purposefully distinguished himself from the crowded comic book genre at every turn. He concluded an original story with his own wholly unique characters he introduced nearly two decades ago. For that, I have to commend him. So enough preliminary jargon, let us dive straight in to "Glass".

Starting with performances as per usual. Everyone is putting 110% into this film. Willis' return as "David Dunn/The Overseer" is nostalgic and rewarding. It's easily one of his better performances in recent years. McAvoy was an absolute revelation in "Split" and here he's no different. In fact he's even more impressive now as he gets to delve into all 24 personalities of "Kevin Wendell Crumb/The Beast". Jackson's return as "Elijah Price/Mr.Glass" is calculated, restrained but worth the wait once he's let off the leash.

Joy's return as "Split" sole survivor "Casey Cooke" brought a surprising amount of emotional depth and understanding to both her and McAvoy's characters. Clark's return as Dunn's son "Joseph" after all these years was impressive and he's become a very solid actor in that time. Woodard's return as Elijah's mother "Mrs. Price" was truly a great addition and offered a rich through-line to Jackson's character. Lastly Paulson's newly introduced "Dr. Ellie Staple" was a very interesting character albeit frustrating at that. Paulson was great as usual. It's specifically her character that I had issues with as we'll get into that later on.

Next up. The cinematography. This is a GREAT looking film. Having previously worked on "Split" as well with Shyamalan, Mike Gioulakis("It Follows", "Us") returned and this looks even better than the latter. It's clear that Gioulakis was in full command of his craft cause "Glass" is easily Shyamalan's best looking film to date.

Next up. The musical score. I was a big fan of West Dylan Thordson's haunting "Split" score when I heard it 3 years ago. So you can imagine my sheer excitement when I discovered that he returned to compose "Glass" as well. Like it's predecessor, Thordson has crafted another haunting score but he also mixed in tones of suspense, excitement and emotional finality. Simply put, I LOVED the music in this.

Now, we get to my issues with the film, of which I have quite a few. I greatly respect and appreciate this film but that doesn't excuse it's flaws. For starters the film's story can be a bit jumbled and unfocused at times. The pacing is another big issue. The first 20-30 minutes are fast paced and exciting. Then the film takes a sharp left hand turn as our core threesome are incarcerated at the psychiatric hospital for the film's 2nd act and most of it's 3rd. This will most likely throw fans for a loop even if they've seen the trailer.

This is where the story can start to meander and lose focus. In fact Willis' character is pretty much sidelined for most of the 2nd act. This will undoubtedly piss off fans and moviegoers alike. For me I noticed it but didn't particularly mind it. Mainly because the interactions between McAvoy and Jackson were so riveting to watch play out. Another issue I had is a final showdown that is teased multiple times but sadly never comes to fruition. I understood the route they took instead but it was still disappointing none the less.

Speaking of disappointing, most of my problems lie in that 3rd act. The decisions that are made here are definitely going to illicit mixed reactions from fans and audiences alike. For me, I felt both disappointed and enlightened with these choices that were made. At a certain point, some things are revealed to the audience. Some made sense and some were just too far a stretch to believe. Most of the latter reveals being connected to Paulson's character. Having said that, I honestly LOVE the way this film concludes. It was cathartic, melancholic and hopeful. Shyamalan finished his own original trilogy his way and I can't help but respect and admire that. Well done sir. Well done.

In conclusion, this film conflicted me to no end. There's so much good stuff in here that I can forgive it's many flaws. I believe the good greatly outweighs the bad in this case. The acting is superb. The cinematography is top notch. The music is beautiful and the story of these characters and this world they live in is completely unique and original. Shyamalan took a different approach to the superhero genre and that approach was a grounded deconstruction of it. If I had to rate the previous two films I'd give "Unbreakable" 5/5 stars and "Split" 4/5 stars. With this in mind I'm going to give "Glass" 3.5/5 stars. Thus is going to divide a lot of people and I look forward to discussing it in the years to come. I very much look forward to what Shyamalan does next in his career.