It's magic

‘Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone’ a well-tailored vision of the novel

By TIM O’COIN
CRUSADER FEATURES EDITOR

"Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" both delights and frustrates in its dogged faithfulness to its source material. Passionate Potter fans that hold author J.K. Rowling's novels with utmost reverence will no doubt be delighted at the movie's extra-careful attention to detail. Others who have read the books, but don't consider the original stories as canon, may be put off by it. Director Chris Columbus' adaptation follows the first book in the Potter series with relative accuracy, so much so that there are few surprises for those readily familiar with the plot. Yet, such rigid exactness is hard to fault here -- it would be foolish for any filmmaker to tinker with Rowling's wildly imaginative and entertaining story. And while Colombus may not take many risks to make the movie his own, he has crafted an exceptionally big-screen treatment of Potter's first adventure.

Fans will no doubt beam with delight as the opening shot pans downward to reveal Privet Drive and Professor Dumbledore (Richard Harris) and McGonagall (Maggie Smith) of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. They're waiting for the arrival of the infant Harry, orphaned (and physically scarred) by an evil wizard named Voldemort.

Harry (played by Daniel Radcliffe) comes under the care (or rather mis-care) of his aunt and uncle, Petunia (Fiona Shaw) and Vernon Dursley (Richard Griffiths). For them, Harry is an unwanted burden -- they feed him scraps and have him sleep in a ludicrously undersized cupboard under the stairs, while they lavishly spoil Harry's portly spoiled-brat cousin Dudley (Harry Melling). His future looks bleak, until Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry--

Sugar Ray & The Bluetones at Theodores' in Springfield
John Paul Jones at the Orpheum Theatre in Boston
Mary Prankster at T.T. The Bear's in Cambridge
Redletter at Sky Bar in Sommerville
Longwave at Lucky Dog in Worcester

Friday, December 7th

Seven Days...
Friday, December 7th

Longwave at Lucky Dog in Worcester
Rockapella at Jorgenston Auditorium in Sturrs, CT
Redletter at Sky Bar in Sommerville
Mary Prankster at T.T. The Bear’s in Cambridge
The Recipe at Tammany Hall in Worcester

Saturday, December 8th

Britney Spears at Hartford Civic Center in Hartford
John Paul Jones at the Orpheum Theatre in Boston
Anthrophobia at The Palladium in Worcester
Sugar Ray & The Bluetones at Theodores' in Springfield

Sunday, December 9th

Dispatch at Bentely College in Waltham
Britney Spears at The FleetCenter in Boston
Lincoln Conspiracy at T.T. The Bear’s in Cambridge
Drop Kick Jesus at Ward II Social Club in Salem

Monday, December 10th

DJ Kush at Axis in Boston
Booey Juice at House of Blues in Cambridge

Tuesday, December 11th

Britney Spears at The FleetCenter in Boston
LFO at The FleetCenter in Boston

Wednesday, December 12th

Mighty Mighty Bosstones at Axis in Boston
Alabama Thunderpussy at the Middle East Club in Cambridge
Lifehouse at Avalon in Boston

Thursday, December 13th

Ozzy Osborne/Rob Zombie at the Hartford Civic Center
Solvent Green at the Palladium in Worcester

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many a cheap, but high quality gift for Christmas here. Toys, toys, and jewelry galore, if you can't find it here then you probably don't need it.

Tatnuck Bookstore- This store is huge and has something for everyone. If you need to find a book or any sort of little gift-type item this is the place to go. You can find jewelry, holistic items, and toys, toys, toys. But good toys, like those puppets I've mentioned before, the ones you can beat people with.

Missing Woo Over Break?

Rent “Steal This Movie” and watch one of the infamous Chicago Seven. Abbie Hoffman Be your yippie Worcesterite self.

Check out “The Ref” or any other suitable Deniz Leary movie. He's from Worcester and he swears a lot - my hero.

Listen to some of the stylings of The J. Gillis Band, or, not, but he's from Worcester too. Oh, so is that guy from Vertical Horizon. I guess you could listen to them too.

Rent “Urban Legends”. The red-headed girl is from Worcester. I think that’s enough to tide you over.

Now if you are feeling generous and are in the Christmas spirit I know of a few places that could use your help.

Telegram & Gazette Santa Fund

c/o Commerce Bank
P.O. Box 15204
Worcester, MA 01615

They take all of the donations sent to them and purchase toys for Worcester children in need.

Abby’s House
21-23 Crown St

Worcester, MA 01609

Abby’s House is a shelter for women and children and you can send any donations to that address. You can also pick up some lovely handmade house pins for $13.00 at various locations including Tatnuck Bookstore.

The Leary Firefighters Foundation.

c/o The Leary Firefighters Foundation
1697 Broadway, Suite 906
New York, NY 10019

Dec. 3 was the second anniversary of the death of six Worcester firefighters in a firehouse. If you feel more inclined to support those firefighters in New York you can send it to the same address and add “New York’s Bravest” on the envelope.

Happy Holidays!

The real fun of “Harry Potter” is to witness how the filmmakers have visually realized the story's many, many, many, many, many, many, many, many, many, many, many, many, many elements, creatures and situations. Places like Diagon Alley, Gringott’s Bank, Platform 9 3/4 and Hogwarts itself have been wonderfully pictured, and capture the atmosphere described by Rowling perfectly. And while visual effects make up a significant portion of the film, they are, overall, rather subdued – they create the world in which the story is told, they don’t supersede it. “Harry Potter” does feature one or two virtuoso effects sequences, the most notable standout being the much-ballyhooed Quidditch match. It’s an intense and exciting action set piece that, ironically, plays out almost exactly as it did in the book. Some other effects, such as the CGI centaurs, trolls and other creatures I could take or leave.

The massive cast all give good performances. Radcliffe, Grint and Watson play their three roles very much in tune with Rowling’s characters. Maggie Smith is near perfect as the rigid Prof. McGonagall, Rickman personifies Snape with just the right amount of cold malice.

“Harry Potter,” while not exactly as the level as the book, is a rarity. It’s a well-crafted, well-told blockbuster that knows the value of a good story.

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