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Written by **Raven Clabough** on July 21, 2012

Movie Review: "The Dark Knight Rises"

The release of *The Dark Knight Rises* was highly anticipated after the successes of the first two films in the trilogy: *Batman Begins* in 2005 and *The Dark Knight* in 2008. Unfortunately, the movie's opening day was clouded by the mass shooting rampage at a movie theater early Friday morning in suburban Denver, in which 12 were killed and 58 injured. However, despite that calamity, *The Dark Knight Rises* proves to be a bold and thrilling sequel to *The Dark Knight* and a wonderful conclusion to the "Batman" trilogy.

The Dark Knight Rises is set eight years after Batman (Christian Bale) disappears into the night as a fugitive in *The Dark Knight*. It begins with Commissioner Gordon (James Oldman) honoring Harvey Dent, whom fans of *The Dark Knight* will remember as the villain who became Two Face at the end of that film before Batman killed him. Gordon knew that Harvey Dent died an evil man, but recognized that the city needed to remember him as the idealistic district attorney he once was. Therefore, Gordon and Batman worked out an arrangement whereby they would preserve Dent's reputation by letting Batman take the fall for the murders committed by Dent, and Batman (and his alter ego, Bruce Wayne, Gotham's richest resident) would go into hiding.

In *The Dark Knight Rises*, neither the police chief nor the mayor is aware of Harvey Dent's transformation to the evil side and blame Batman for killing one whom they perceive to be a heroic man. In response, the two do what any good reactive, politicians would, and work to pass an excessive law that they believe will effectively end crime. Called the Dent Act, the new law puts criminals away without any possibility for appeal. And for a period of time, the city appears to be free of criminal activity.

But while the city is enjoying a crime-free period, a vengeful masked man named Bane (Tom Hardy) has been building an army of evildoers in the sewers of Gotham City to take down the rich, occupy the city, and start a revolution. At the beginning of *The Dark Knight Rises*, he kidnaps a nuclear scientist from the CIA, and is well on his way.

Bane is also very familiar with Bruce Wayne's Wayne Industries, a developer of fusion power. Wayne invests nearly half his company's finances in producing a source of clean energy, but then realizes he must hide it to prevent that energy from being used to develop a bomb. He passes the company off as a failure, again selflessly taking blame upon himself — this time for the firm's demise.

Wayne could not have been more right about his energy source being used for evil. Once Bane launches his revolution, he seizes Wayne Industries to begin creating that bomb. To prevent Batman from stopping him, Bane roughs him up and incarcerates him in an impenetrable prison.

Bane has already begun to wreak total havoc by bombing bridges and isolating the city of Gotham. His revolution closely resembles the French Revolution's Reign of Terror, as he impugns the entire wealthy population of Gotham and sentences them to either death or exile.

The people of Gotham are desperate for a hero, and we all know that the best man for the job is Batman. But the question is, will he be able to rise up once again and restore justice and peace after his fall from greatness eight years ago? What transpires is well worth the cost of a movie ticket.

The *Dark Knight Rises* is a well-made film with some tremendous action and adventure, balanced by a well-orchestrated plot. It is highly theatric with a fantastic score that meshes well with the scenes. The all-star cast includes Christian Bale, Gary Oldman, Morgan Freeman, Liam Neeson, and Michael Caine, though none comes anywhere near Heath Ledger's masterful portrayal of the Joker in *The Dark Knight*.

The film is set in a gritty New York City following September 11, which includes the tower at Ground Zero that is still under construction. Though such a setting is somewhat disturbing considering that this film's villain is a terrorist trained in the Middle East, it adds to the movie's tone and mood.

And while the film maintains the ominous, dark mood that is typical of the Batman films, it places a strong emphasis on good conquering evil. Villains are even transformed in some cases, finding hope. And the good people in the film are selfless and loyal.

The movie seems to be making a fiery statement about extremism, portraying Marxism and revolution as evil, as well as greed, corruption, and the allure of mob mentality. It underscores what often happens with misplaced anger and relays a message that perhaps some of the members of the Occupy Wall Street crowd may have lessons to learn.

The Dark Knight Rises reveals that there is often a more destructive agenda behind movements such as the Occupy Power to the People movement that Bane is leading in Gotham.

Perhaps most amazingly, this film's Batman is clearly portrayed as a Christ-like figure. He emerges from the prison in which Bane placed him after three months, like Christ's rise on the third day. When Batman finally emerges, he does so after his fellow inmates chant "Rise," to him, much like Christ's "rise" from the dead. Likewise, when Batman embarks on his plan to stop Bane, he does so with the full acceptance that it will be his final endeavor before he dies.

Also adding to the Christ-like depiction of Batman, Catwoman (Anne Hathaway) is on a search for a program called "clean slate" that will wipe out her history and allow her to remove her past sins. And in the end, the only person who has that program is Batman, and he gives it to her freely and willingly, asking her to be more helpful, but not demanding it. His gift to her is a clean slate, and it comes without any strings attached.

In addition to Batman's sacrificial goodness, we encounter another hero in this film: John Blake (Joseph Gordon-Levitt), an idealistic new cop who strives to do the right thing even at the most difficult of times.

This film differs a bit from the other two in the Batman trilogy in that while the other movies examine the psychology behind evil, this one focuses on sociological elements of evil.

Still, despite the entertaining nature of *The Dark Knight Rises*, the film is not for all audiences. It does include profanity and some sexuality. The violence is often intense, though not gory or over the top.

Much of the film's quality must be attributed to director Christopher Nolan, who has garnered a reputation for well-constructed films after movies such as *Inception* and *Memento*. The movie's theatrics and cinematography are absolutely spectacular.

Overall, *The Dark Knight Rises* is an outstanding finale to the trilogy and a sure crowd-pleaser.

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