

MARY POPPINS RETURNS

USA | 2018 | 130' | Comedy/Family/Fantasy | Rated PG

Directed by

Rob Marshall

Written with

David Magee
John DeLuca

With

Emily Blunt
Lin-Manuel Miranda
Colin Firth
Ben Whishaw
Emily Mortimer
Julie Walters
Meryl Streep

Original Music by

Marc Shaiman



Première:

29 November 2018
(Los Angeles)

World release:

19 December 2018

In a place we hold dear, where wonder once lived... but soon from above, a new story begins.

Budget: \$ 130.000.000

Gross: \$ 205.000.000

REVIEW

20 years have passed since Mary Poppins left 17, Cherry Tree Lane: now Michael runs the house with the help of the long-term housekeeper Ellen and of his sister Jane; this time, the Banks' children are three - twins Anabel and John and their little brother Georgie - but it's the house itself that is most endangered by an eviction notice. Will Mary Poppins' wonderful adventures and instructive songs be enough to find their way out of trouble?

54 years is an extremely long time. One of the longest between a movie and its sequel (or franchise continuation). The world has changed, the technology and the things movies are made of have changed even more, so in order to analyze this particular movie one has to ponder a lot on how to proceed. Maybe it is ineluctable to compare the 1964 masterpiece to this movie, but is it rational? I don't think so.

The choice is even more complicated when looking at Rob Marshall, a real guru in the musical comedies field, who cannot resist the temptation to quote almost every single moment of the original movie and together with composer Marc Shaiman they build something completely new... but at the same time with a mixed taste of tribute and melancholia.

Whatever's happened in those twenty years (or in these fifty) what's incredibly well brought up again is Cherry Tree Lane - and all of London with it. The artists behind the scenes did a wonderful job but the most wonderful thing is how, at the end of the day, all the characters seem at their ease inside of this credible but dreamy world. The objects, the costumes, the never-ending desire to keep the focus on the story without weighing on it with the potentially unhappy storyline are the things that, most of all, can make the original movie sit this analysis out.

It would be a shame and painfully unfair to compare Emily Blunt with Julie Andrews; the voice is different - even if the appearance is incredibly well preserved - and even the idea behind the character. Blunt plays a role in the story way more than Andrews did, not in terms of actions but in terms of how she reacts, looks, says things. She makes her point every single time with good singing performances and even better possession of Mary

Poppins' soul. Again, I just think time and situations are way too different to be just coldly evaluated.

Lin-Manuel Miranda has a slightly easier job, as Jack is not Bert (even if the role in the story is exactly the same). His cockney accent is a bit rougher than Van Dyke's, but we're talking about a hell of a comedian, while Miranda's skills are different and also less mature. He gets the cheerful attitude of the character and he plays it well enough almost throughout the movie: a couple of shaky scenes are greatly balanced by his incredible spoken and singing interpretation of "A Cover Is Not The Book".

The other character worth analysing is Ben Whishaw's Michael Banks. Unfortunately, this is the least convincing performance. The little Banks kid has grown up, of course, but he is one of the only linking points between the stories - and the fact is repeated more than once in his lines - so he should have been something different than this spineless head of the family. George Banks (David Tomlinson) had a wrong attitude and had to be "saved" by Mary Poppins, but at least he had a personality, while Whishaw has less resolve than his children (by the way, good but not unforgettable performances by the three little guys Nathanael Saleh, Pixie Davies and Joel Dawson).

What can be argued most about is the soundtrack. Every single song of this movie mirrors one of the original movie's, apart from the very first one maybe. And this is where, mostly, the judgment is too obvious to be escaped. If "Trip A Little Light Fantastic" is, in my opinion, a card well played to imitate "Step In Time", the worst is done by Meryl Streep's character's "Turning Turtle", which is not only too long but also too flat where "I Love To Laugh" was a funny intermission between the two parts of the story. To Marc Shaiman I just have to say: it was an ingrate job, so to have done well on the majority of the songs is, in my opinion, a good result.

"Mary Poppins Returns" may be an "easy" marketing move, maybe it touches something that most of the grown-up children would have preferred left untouched in its greatness and it's difficult not to be sympathetic with them. Even so, I find that it's a good exercise to try and be objective with the movie, after all these years it's only fair to both: in the end, I just can say I liked it. If someone didn't... well, I agree to disagree.

ASSESSMENT	
POSTER	88%
TAGLINE	50%
TRAILER	70%
SATISFACTION	77%
DIRECTING	87%
SCREENPLAY	80%
PRODUCTION DESIGN	90%
CINEMATOGRAPHY	92%
CAST	88%
MUSIC	83%
TOTAL	85% = B