

Movie Review: Twilight < <http://events.charlotteobserver.com/movies/show/31988-twilight>>  
Nov. 20, 2008 - The Charlotte Observer - Lawrence Toppman



Genres: Action, Drama, Horror  
Running Time: 120 min  
Release Date: Nov 21, 2008  
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The Charlotte Observer

How thrilling to be a teenager for eternity: You'd have no job responsibilities, freedom to do anything without facing adult consequences, and the knowledge that the love that burns now like an all-consuming flame would never be extinguished. Yet how terrible, too: Your emotional growth would be stunted, and you'd be trapped in a body most folks would never take as seriously as you'd desire. That's the subtext of "Twilight," in which shy Bella (Kristen Stewart) and strange Edward (Robert Pattinson) find themselves locked in a love affair likely to end badly for both. She's the daughter of the police chief of Forks, Wash., who has left her much-traveled mom to settle in the Pacific Northwest. He's a 107-year-old high school junior, a vampire who has joined a clan of "vegetarians" who live on the blood of animals but don't trust themselves in extended relationships with mortals. Fans of the Stephenie Meyer novels have already begun to complain about ways in which the movie digresses from the sacred texts. Yet I think director Catherine Hardwicke and writer Melissa Rosenberg have a different and perhaps more interesting aim: to bring people who haven't read the books and are by no means the target audience into this world. As in "Thirteen," "Lords of Dogtown" and even "The Nativity Story," Hardwicke deals with a teen whose calm existence is changed in a catastrophic way – not by drugs or money or unexpected pregnancy, but by a forbidden love bearing a taboo as strong as incest. Bella's desire for Edward goes beyond love to madness. His need for her is heightened not by lust but by the lust for blood: He fears he may not be able to control his impulse to devour her, drawn to her though he is. "What if I go too far?" he asks his adoptive vampire father while about to suck venom from Bella's wound. (The sexual metaphor is easy to see.) The filmmakers have wrapped this story in conventional trappings: Bad vampires learn that the good ones have a human in their midst, demand to eat her and start a little battle among the undead. Meanwhile, a native American named Jacob (Taylor Lautner) indicates a more ordinary interest in Bella, who can hardly see him. (Jacob may become a more serious contender for her hand in the next film. The ending clearly indicates a sequel.) Hardwicke and Rosenberg depart from tradition in many ways. Bella's parents care for her and connect frequently with their daughter yet respect her individuality and give her privacy. Bella is teased by her new classmates but soon fits into this diverse crowd. (Hey, students who enjoy high school and get something out of it – a revolutionary cinematic concept!) The two stars take a while to find their feet, but I think they'll work out over the long haul (if there is one). Stewart has sounded one note so far in her brief career – that of a somber, yearning girl who seems older than her years – but it's the right one for "Twilight." Pattinson grows on us as he grows on Bella: His weird mannerisms and nervous delivery stop seeming like quirks and acquire an intensity that's hard to resist by the end. Whether fans will agree, I can't say – but for once, they're not the only people for whom an adaptation of a beloved book was made.