

Potter: Film is flawed by childish acting

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Hogwarts, has been chosen to host the Triwizard tournament, a competition in which one champion from three wizard schools competes in a series of wizarding tasks. Because of an unexpected magical mishap, Harry becomes a fourth competitor in the tournament. This turn of events leads to jealousy, confusion and even fear for the young wizard's life.

The plot involving Harry's trials and tribulations within the tournament is crafted alongside the overarching plot of the series: The Dark Lord Voldemort, murderer of Harry's parents and myriad other wizards, is slowly regaining power. Because Harry is the only person to have ever survived an attack against Voldemort — Voldemort almost died while trying to kill infant Harry — all fear that the Dark Lord will again come after "the boy who lived."

Even before the opening credits begin to roll, the dark lighting and scary imagery let the audience know that this tale of a boy wizard will not be for the faint of heart. The book might have been written for children, but the movie is targeted to an older, broader audience.

Although "Harry Potter" is getting more mature in terms of theme and content, there is one aspect of the film which is clearly childish: The acting.

The unfortunate truth is that Daniel Radcliffe (portraying Harry Potter) and Emma Watson (portraying Hermione Granger) are not good actors, at least in this film.

Radcliffe spends the majority of the film gritting his teeth, breathing heavily

and looking off to the side in angst. The hardest part about this film is trying to ignore Harry's one-dimensional, somewhat-off nature. It also doesn't help that Radcliffe, when not speaking, is usually standing perfectly still, with his arms hanging, fists slightly clenched, at his side. The movements and body of the character just look awkward at these moments; you feel like you're watching actors rehearsing lines on a stage before the director has given them guidance.

It should be noted that Watson may very well be a terrific actress suffering from the influence of bad lines and apparently bad direction. In the books, Hermione is as smart as they come and a slight show-off, someone who likes to give advice and make her opinion heard. In this film, however, Hermione takes on the role of weepy cheerleader. She rah-rah's Harry throughout the film and is given a lot of one-liner, "Come on Harry, we're going to be late," kind of dialogue. Watson often looks as though she is moments away from bursting into tears. As a result, the story suffers a lack of intellectual, comic energy, which the novel so well induced through Hermione.

The nice thing about sub-par child actors is that their flaws are easy enough to overlook in context with the fact that no one really expects dynamic child characters anyway. Radcliffe and Watson's shortcomings are not so extreme that the movie is rendered completely unenjoyable. Indeed, the fourth installment of the series had many positive traits, the first of which is that

director Mike Newell's interpretation of the Triwizard camping grounds looks like a scene taken from the Oregon Country Fair.

The fourth movie finds the bulk of its cinematic strength in the fact that it is a nice stylistic balance of the first two movies and the third. In movies one and two, Christopher Columbus worked almost too hard to include every detail from the book; in the third movie, audiences complained that Alfonso Cuarón strayed far away from the plot while adding his artistic touch (though I would still personally contend that this was an apt directorial decision). Newell, however, smoothly lays out the key action of the book, while still maintaining an artistic and entertaining film.

Adapting a book onto the big screen is never an easy task, especially when said book spans more than 700 pages. Newell does a fabulous job of staying close to the original storyline while avoiding an overload of semi-important subplots. It was only after leaving the theater that I realized Newell had diverted from the custom of beginning every Harry Potter film the way the books begin: At the home of Harry's muggle (non-wizard) aunt and uncle.

All in all, "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire" is a good adaptation. Though it lacks some subtle humor and rounded, lovable characters easily found in Rowling's novel, the film does exactly what any good adaptation should: It sticks to the plot and is entertaining whether you've read the books or not.

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Lichty: Asians lack recognition in media

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"Even though to me, a Japanese schoolgirl uniform is kind of like blackface, I am just in acceptance over it, because something is better than nothing," Cho wrote. "An ugly picture is better than a blank space, and it means that one day, we will have another display at the Museum of Asian Invisibility that groups of children will crowd around in disbelief, because once upon a time, we weren't there."

Asian-Americans are the third largest minority in the United States behind Hispanics and African-Americans. There are Asian influences everywhere in this country, from Tai Chi to feng shui to the sushi bar down the street. But when it comes to Asian-Americans actually being noticed, that's another thing entirely.

In 2000, the nation's largest toy maker, Mattel, came out with "President Barbie." This iconic figure stood as a

role model to little girls everywhere who wanted to rule the most powerful country in the world. Except for little Asian girls.

There was an African-American President Barbie, a Hispanic President Barbie and of course the natural blond President Barbie, all in professional pantsuits ready to declare war, sign treaties or have the vice president over for a cup of tea in the Oval Office. But Mattel somehow overlooked the Asian-American President Barbie, who must have lost in the primaries. Maybe she wasn't even nominated.

This obvious snub outraged the Asian-American community, members of which demanded to know why Asian girls couldn't play with a doll that looked like them and held the most powerful position in the United States.

"That particular community has not expressed interest in a doll that reflects their ethnicity," Mattel spokeswoman,

Julia Jensen told The Boston Globe in May 2000.

Pardon me while I punch you in the face, Ms. Jensen.

Growing up, I longed for dolls that looked like me. My baby dolls were always "adopted" because I put together that there was no way some blond baby could have any scrap of my DNA whatsoever. But, unsurprisingly, there were no Asian dolls for me to buy because toy companies like Mattel had already made the decision that I really didn't want one anyway. What a load of crap.

For all of the Lucy Lius out there, there will be three Jessica Simpsons — talentless blondes with big boobs and a southern twang. But hey, isn't that what Americans really want anyway?

Now please excuse me while I fade into the background.

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GameTap: A wide array of games is available

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meaning players should be able to surf the Web while GameTap downloads a large game.

GameTap has a lot of potential; it is an interesting and effective take on

syndication and distribution. Nintendo has announced that its upcoming console, currently dubbed Revolution, will offer a similar service that will provide access to on-demand Nintendo classics. If GameTap

keeps growing, it will be an invaluable service for the casual or hard-core gamer who wants to take a trip down gaming's memory lane.

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