

'Jurassic World Dominion' gets a jolt from original stars

By Chris Hewitt

Star Tribune

What is Albert Einstein's definition of insanity? Letting the dinosaurs out of their cages, over and over, and expecting them not to slaughter all of humanity this time?

That happens — again — in "Jurassic World Dominion," which takes an hour to get going but becomes satisfying, largely thanks to old cinematic friends who haven't united since the original "Jurassic Park" in 1993. Laura Dern, Jeff Goldblum and Sam Neill all return in "Dominion," and they are the best thing about it.

In the first hour, those OGs keep us interested in a movie that seems unsure what we want from the sixth in the series (hint: It's dinosaurs). The world has become so used to dinos that some are being domesticated, even weaponized.

After reintroducing us to Bryce Dallas Howard and Chris Pratt, who starred in films No. 4 and 5 — and now live in a Utah cabin that looks like a box



From left: Dr. Ian Malcolm (Jeff Goldblum), Dr. Alan Grant (Sam Neill), Dr. Ellie Sattler (Laura Dern), Claire Dearing (Bryce Dallas Howard), Owen Grady (Chris Pratt), Maisie Lockwood (Isabella Sermon) and Kayla Watts (DeWanda Wise) in "Jurassic World Dominion," co-written and directed by Colin Trevorrow. John Wilson/Universal Pictures

of human meat to their dino-neighbors — "Jurassic" takes an extraneous detour into 007-style international intrigue, with scenes set in Malta, Italy and elsewhere.

It's OK (there's a spectacular motorcycle chase) but the film seems to have forgotten the first word of its title. Dern, Goldblum and Neill never do.

Dern and Neill's scientists, officially the slowest-burning will-they-or-won't-they? in cinematic history, have stumbled onto a

corrupt company called Biosyn that is using dinosaurs to take over the world food supply and perhaps something even more nefarious. So they journey to corporate headquarters to meet their frenemy Goldblum, who helps turn the tables on Biosyn's evil leader, played by Campbell Scott. (Like Mark Rylance in "Don't Look Up," Scott seems to be doing a white-haired riff on Apple's seemingly mild Tim Cook).

The appeal of the first and still

best "Jurassic" was its simplicity: "Dinosaurs! Cool! Uh-oh!" Director Colin Trevorrow gums up "Dominion" with too many complications — including an amusing performance by DeWanda Wise as a daring pilot but also several people who won't interest you — and that makes for a choppy film. Just when

something gets interesting in the first hour, we're off to another subplot.

The last hour, though, is one dangerous set piece after another, and they all work. The characters, who've been on separate missions, finally unite to the strains of John Williams' original "Jurassic Park" theme, and the movie gets down to the business of watching humans we like just barely escape from rapacious dinosaurs.

Maybe Trevorrow thought the movie needed new elements because we've grown too accustomed to special-effects dinosaurs, but don't worry. The "Jurassic" innovators still have several nasty creatures to creep us out with.

They still have the original trio, too. No disrespect to Platt and Howard, who are fine, but it feels like the wonder, fear and curiosity that Dern, Goldblum and Neill brought to "Jurassic Park" comes rushing back here.

Each is given a lovely echo of a moment from the first movie, and each brings a quality that enlivens "Dominion": the amazement of Dern, the decency of Neill and the wit of Goldblum, who is to "Jurassic" movies what Maggie Smith is to the "Downton" universe. Every single word he says is hilarious.

In the end, "Dominion" succeeds not because of anything fresh but because of its familiarity: Kids are saved from peril, bad guys get eaten and it all ends with a helicopter zooming into the distance, unaware of dangers that lurk in the next sequel.

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