



Courtesy of Warner Brothers Studios

The ghoulish character of the Joker, played by Heath Ledger, stands menacingly in the streets of Gotham City, however Ledger's character lacks presence in the special edition.

Dark Knight special edition lacks depth

BY JOHN HITZEL
Reviewer

Warner Brothers is re-releasing the "Dark Knight" in theaters at the January 23, in a bid to outdo "Titanic." Keep in mind that "The Dark Knight" stands \$69 million (in American box office earnings) behind the most predictable movie ever made.

I scored my copy of the special edition DVD at an after Christmas sale. Don't worry, though. There will come another sale soon, a glorious time when two-disc editions of otherwise one-disc media will be reasonably priced again, and visions of great deals will dance in our advertisement-filled heads. Thankfully, it's still the holidays as far as capitalism goes (Valentine's and Presidents' Day sales coming soon), so these mythical miracles will occur, assuming vendors don't go out of business or catch fire in a last-ditch attempt at profiting a la insurance fraud before then.

Heath Ledger is mournfully missing from the special features disc. Call me curious, or morbid, but considering all the hearsay about what playing the Joker supposedly did to Ledger, any bonus footage — be it interviews, bloopers, alternate takes, unused scenes, make-up room conversation, even alternate camera angles — would have been appreci-

ated, if only to gain a little more insight into Ledger's gleefully disturbing immersion into both the late actor's favorite role and the most talked-about performance of 2008. Considering that this film, though a Batman movie, was as much, if not more, about the Joker, I can't help but feel horrendously slighted by the gaping hole this disc has gouged into itself through this glaring omission.

There are no deleted scenes. Deleted scenes are usually deleted for a reason: they suck and the film is better off without them. Given that "The Dark Knight" is over two and a half hours long, maybe they just put everything in the theatrical release, or perhaps this is an effort by Warner Brothers to get people to buy future rereleases, which I wouldn't put past them. Either way, the only footage not shown in theaters exists only in the behind-the-scenes vignettes.

The IMAX scenes are gigantic in scale and indescribably crisp in resolution. If you have a High Definition or widescreen television, you are in luck. I have never been impressed by next-gen graphic technology. I thought it was all hype and no substance,

people obsessing over bells and whistles just so they could say they have them. These IMAX scenes have shown me that there is some truth behind all the hoopla.

Other than the IMAX scenes, there are galleries of still images, trailers and poster art. There is a spot about redesigning the Batsuit and about designing the Batpod (Batcycle). Cool stuff. The piece on Hans Zimmer discovering the sound of the Joker is intense. Spoiler: the sound is two notes on a cello, with some background guitars being scraped with a scrap of metal, and pencils tapping on tables.

The six episodes of "Gotham Tonight," the approximately 7-minute-long news satires (maybe they aren't satires — perhaps I'm just too aware of the plan), are hilarious, as well as displaying a perspective on Gotham City from people other than major characters. As a (former) journalism student, these shorts nailed how dodgy, grandstanding and ultimately disinformative news has become. Issues are raised, but never addressed seriously. The talking head just sets the topic, sits back and lets his guests — these, uh

... civilized people — eat each other. The celebrity-worship-format feature on "Bruce Wayne: Billionaire Without a Cause," along with the interviews with Muroi and Dent that take place chronologically before the film begins, are gems.

The most functional feature is the digital copy option. Owners can go online and get a free digital copy of the movie, so that nobody has to break the law just to have this movie on their computers, or to have a backup copy in case the disc gets scratched (which it always does).

Honestly, I expected a lot from the special features, since the film delivered so much while leaving me wanting so much more when the credits finally rolled. I don't feel satisfied by this so-called "special edition." No deleted scenes? No commentary? No feature on Heath Ledger? I hear that there are even more features on the Blu-Ray version. What did the designers believe they were doing when they produced this scant collection of extras? Well, one person would say, "I believe that whatever doesn't kill you simply makes you ... stranger." Call me strange, and call them strange, but I figured that the second-biggest movie of all time would deliver a wallop of a special edition. Maybe they should just call it the "extra stuff edition." It's a good thing I bought this one on sale.

"Maybe they should just call it the 'extra stuff edition.' It's a good thing I bought this one on sale."

Bedtime Stories attracts multiple generations

BY ALEX BOLES
Copy Chief

The theater was packed with grandparents chauffeuring their grandkids through crowded aisles. Someone even brought a baby, who cried, of course, which goes to show that this movie is directed toward a younger (or in the grandparents' case, older) audience. As much as I would love to remain a kid forever, I will not, but I did enjoy this film, like I've enjoyed most of Adam Sandler's films.

The film centers on the hotel that Marty Bronson (Jonathan Pryce) leaves for his son, Skeeter (Sandler). Before Bronson Sr. passes away, he sells the hotel to Mr. Nottingham (Richard Griffiths, Vernon Dursley in the Harry Potter series) with the promise that Nottingham will let Skeeter run the place when he is old enough. Well, good old dad passes away and his children Skeeter and Wendy (Courtney Cox) are left with the memory of his amazing bedtime stories. Years later, we see Skeeter working in the hotel, but instead of managing the hotel, he manages the maintenance. So far, Nottingham has gone back on his promise to Skeeter's father, but Skeeter refuses to find work other than in his father's

hotel. Skeeter's sister, Wendy, has to go away for a job interview because Nottingham is thinking of building a new hotel on the land that now occupies the elementary school where she works, and she leaves Skeeter and her best friend Jill (Keri Russel) in charge of her two kids, Bobbi and Patrick. Skeeter takes the night shift and in due time, the kids demand a bedtime story. As Skeeter makes up bedtime stories night after night, the kids add in their own exciting details, which then transfer into Skeeter's own life. For example, "It started raining gumballs," Patrick says one night, and the next day a candy truck crashes on the overpass above Skeeter's car, making it seem as if gumballs are raining down. Skeeter is convinced the kids' stories are coming true and tries to lead them into saying things he wants, like him receiving a red Ferrari for free and getting a date with Nottingham's young, beautiful daughter, Violet (Teresa Palmer), but they don't. A competition ensues between Skeeter and the man Nottingham originally appointed the next manager of the hotel, Kendall (Guy Pearce) when Nottingham tells them that whoever comes up with a better theme for the new hotel will be the manager. He tries to make his last night with

the kids determine the outcome of the competition, but the imaginative minds of the children make it end with him on fire and speaking in an alien language in a space battle. I won't tell you who wins and how, but I will tell you that Skeeter has to fight for the girl, who is the fairest maiden of them all.

Adam Sandler has a way with comedy, but he loses points because I didn't see a big change or improvement from his previous comedic roles. He is a fantastic actor — I'll give him that. His last film that I saw and liked was "Reign Over Me." It was slightly depressing, but he was impeccable. I would not, however, deem this movie as award worthy. It's a great kids' film and one to watch with the family, but definitely should not be placed with the other noms. Sandler didn't really step out of his box, which is what I would like to see from him soon.

Keri Russel did a good job playing the love interest, and I am happy to see her back in the Hollywood flicks. I don't think "Waitress" made as big of a splash as she would have hoped, but I would have thought "August Rush" would get people talking about her — that movie was phenomenal. At any rate, I would like to see what she



Courtesy of Disney Studios

has to offer in the future.

If you've seen "Forgetting Sarah Marshall," then you will love Sandler's sidekick best friend: none other than Russel Brand — Kristen Bell's hot, Australian boyfriend in the film. He is hilari-

ous, and I look forward to seeing him again.

I give the film a 3.5 out of 5 stars. The acting was predictable but good, and the plot was well thought out and fun to decipher. Keep it up, Disney!

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