

4e- “Avatar 2” bites off more than it can chew

James Cameron’s “Avatar 2: The Way of Water,” the sequel to the 2009 movie “Avatar,” opens up with spectacular sweeping shots of a beautifully-crafted world and a montage of a growing family that serves as an emotional hook very few can resist.

“Avatar 2” starts strong with some great narration, stellar cinematography and the foundations of a premise that gets you hooked on this family that we first met 13 years ago. Unfortunately, it only goes downhill after that.

The screenplay is a major letdown – too much exposition, a rather unnecessary second act and an exceptionally predictable narrative make the film a tedious watch. Cameron deserves credit for going out of his way to properly develop some of his characters, even if it means adding an hour to a film that’s severely lacking in plot to make up for its running minutes. While the intention is praiseworthy, the execution is anything but. (...) However, none of these storylines are properly fleshed out.

This is where “Avatar 2” meets its biggest downfall — trying to do too much with very little material, plot-wise. Cameron attempts to address themes of ecological conservation, the battle between man and nature, the convoluted and often toxic father-son dynamic that is promoted in society, the struggle of accepting one’s identity, judging people based on their parent’s crimes, human greed and animal poaching in a three-hour movie while also fully developing eight main characters and adding on several new supporting ones. In doing so, the film becomes a classic case of biting off more than you can chew.

With the title of the film, the massively powerful blue avatars and the concept of (a hilariously badly pronounced) “amrita” being central points of the screenplay, yes, you guessed it, the film borrows massively from Hindu mythology. It is more than “heavily inspired” by these legends and myths which it integrates into its screenplay without any sensitivity or cultural context.

This is not to say that the film doesn’t have anything going for it – it is undoubtedly the best motion capture we’ve ever experienced on the big screen. The lighting and cinematography create an absolute visual spectacle, the production and character design is exquisite, the CGI and VFX teams deserve all the praise in the world for being pioneers in the field.

They are assisted by fleeting moments in the screenplay that are surprisingly poignant thanks to a very strong cast that tries their absolute best with the limited material they’re given. The newcomers hold their own while performing next to legends of the business.

However, the run time of the film, at three hours and 12 minutes, makes it a tough watch even if you hold the nostalgia of its predecessor in your heart. Add the water-thin screenplay and narration and you have a movie that is a technical masterpiece but fails to evoke any emotions in its viewers or even keep their attention. Ironically, in trying to explore the depths of this new world, “Avatar: The Way of Water” loses its soul.