

Ishq In A Backpack

A HONEYMOON ADVENTURE

MOVIE REVIEW: TWILIGHT



BLOOD AND LUST?

Surprisingly, in *Twilight*, it works. Sort of.

BY SONA CHARAIPOTRA

Having seen my fair share of teen tomes turned into tragically bad movies – anyone recall the insipid, inane *Blood & Chocolate*? – I wasn't expecting all that much from Catherine Hardwicke's adaptation of Stephenie Meyer's best-selling vampire tale, *Twilight*. Sure, Hardwicke was a charmer, with her California breeziness, and had a solid pedigree with smarter teen fare like *Thirteen* and *Lords of Dogtown*. And yeah, I could see why the film's star, Rob Pattinson (check out my *New York Times* piece on him in my portfolio) had *Twilight*-ers across the country asking him to please, please bite them (see the *Premiere.com* Q&A for more on that). But still, Hollywood has been known to mess a good thing up.

And I've read the books. I know that they can be addictive. Still, the fact that book and its sequels have sold 10 million copies and counting has left many a grown-up scratching their head in perplexed amusement. In fact, after seeing the film, I told Navdeep that, were I still in college, I'd probably write a paper on the subject for one of my American Studies classes. Because all the elements of the teen phenomenon fall into place here. The concept and the writing are both deceptively simple, a *Romeo and Juliet*-esque tale of forbidden love – and with it, a rippling undercurrent of emerging sexuality. There's the near-perfect yet fatally

flawed heartthrob in Rob Pattinson's steely-yet-sweet Edward Cullen. And in Kristen Stewart's Bella, a classic everyteen of sorts, girls across the country have found themselves. She's the plain Jane, the klutz, the loner who spends most of her time inside her own head. And yet, to Edward, she's the perfect one. So it's understandable why the girls – and their moms – are swooning. Who doesn't love it when the underdog wins? Who doesn't want what they can't have? It's this relatability that's at the heart of *Twilight's* success.

So, with writer Melissa Rosenberg's script smartly sticking close to the book, the film won't disappoint fans. But despite Rosenberg's beefed up bad guys, there's still not all that much happening by way of plot here. It's essentially vampire-with-a-heart-of-gold meets the new girl, vampire falls for girl, vampire must save girl from other vampires. There are a few added action sequences, but the special effects – like the infamous diamond-twinkling Edward or the vampire baseball scene, for example – bomb big time, especially considering the hype.



Still, Hardwicke does what she can with breathtaking, travel mag-worthy scenes of Oregon's lush forestry. And the script quickly and effectively sets up the tension between Edward and his eventual rival, Jacob, leaving fans lusting for the inevitable sequels. (In fact, Rosenberg is already hard at work on scripts for *New Moon* and *Eclipse*, in which Jacob is far more central.) But there are the inescapable few moments of cheesiness, such as a scene where Bella details how she figured out Edward's secret. The cheese is tempered with understated performances by Stewart and Pattinson (whose quietly underplayed "And so the lion fell in love with the lamb" is surprisingly effective, rather than corny). The chemistry between the two is palpable, and it's what will bring the squealing fans back into theaters again and again.