

Stardust Review (Published in Death Ray Magazine)

Since the late 80's releases of Rob Reiner's *The Princess Bride* and Ron Howard's *Willow*, fantasy films have lacked the charming exaggerated goofiness that the genre should indulge us with. Matthew Vaughn's adaptation of Neil Gaiman's *Stardust* finally filled that void and with it brought one of the years most memorable pictures.

Tristan, played by Charlie Cox (*Casanova*), is the son of a local shopkeeper who falls in love with Sienna Miller's Victoria. His love is but a distant dream until she requests him to recover a fallen star. Only one problem: the star is actually a beautiful woman called Yvaine (Clare Danes), who doesn't hold Tristan's love life as a priority, having just fallen from the sky. After some exposition, involving witches wanting to eat Yvaine's heart and the death of the king (Peter O'Toole), *Stardust* soon settles into full swing and reveals its wonderful fantasy. The story is helped no end by a host of brilliant performances. De Niro's portrayal of a pirate is both hilarious and against type, Cox and Danes work excellently off one another, with Cox proving his leading man potential, and Michelle Pfeifer makes a great villain, balancing intolerable cruelty with comic presence.

The HD DVD is only marginally better quality than the SD, though the colours are more vibrant, the black levels deep and overall quality crisp and clear. It does suffer noticeable grain though and comes nowhere near the higher-end blockbuster films with which it competes. The audio maintains the SD's Dolby Digital 5.1 surround-sound and conjures the score nicely, also giving spell effects and swords a lot of pizzazz. It's not exactly a night at Symphony Hall, but it does back-up the grandiose fantasy admirably.

The extras included in this set certainly leave room for a more definitive version down the line. Most of the material is typical EPK packaging. The "Good Omens" fifteen minute making-of documentary portrays production far too smoothly and lacks any grit. Most of the deleted scenes are pretty pointless and uninteresting and the blooper reel does little to redeem the disappointment.

Film: ****
Extras: ***
Picture:***
Audio:****

Stardust is a charming fantasy tale and the disc captures it nicely. As a complete package, more could be expected.

Verdict: ***1/2