

Who Has the Power?

A Masters of the Universe (2026) Review

By: Adam Dombrow

Mattel's He-Man franchise had to be near the tippy top of the list of "things we don't need"; but nostalgia is king, and what is old is new once again, so here we are. I was iffy on the *Masters of the Universe* remake right up until they released a trailer. I was a huge *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe* fan growing up—I had all of the toys *except* for the damned Castle Grayskull playset (which ironically enough, kind of created *more* of a childhood memory for me, as I used to play with the castle when we would have holiday parties at my uncle's house)—and I must confess that the original *Masters of the Universe* movie is still to this day a guilty pleasure watch for me (one of those so bad it's good watches); however, my fondness for these old franchises always gives me pause when I hear that they are trying to relaunch them. The initial trailer though gave me some hope. Maybe, just maybe if they could completely nail the tone of the show, this remake might just work!

Truth be told, what we received with this relaunch is a bit of a mixed bag on almost **all** accounts, and while they do get *some* things right, I highly doubt it will be enough to successfully relaunch this franchise.

The one thing I will admit isn't a mixed bag here is the nostalgia factor. Bottom line, if you were a fan of the *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe* tv show, there is a lot to like in this movie. You get a nice little collection of the characters from the show, and they all get their moments to shine. On top of the characters, the writer's room (Chris Butler, Aaron and Adam Nee, David Callaham, Alex Litvak, and Michael Finch) reference many of the infamous He-Man

online memes (except probably my favorite one—more on that later), so the more familiar you are with the characters and memes, the more there is to like. Furthermore, the movie *feels* nostalgic in the sense that is very much reminiscent of the 80's and early 90's "zero to hero" fantasy movies. I couldn't help myself from thinking that this movie reminded me *a lot* of *The Neverending Story* or *The Pagemaster*. So if that sort of thing is in your forte, this is the movie for you!

Every other aspect of *Masters of the Universe '26* though is hit-or-miss: the visuals, the acting, and *especially* the writing, all come with a mix of good and bad.

From a visual perspective, *Masters of the Universe '26* looks *alright*. Admittedly, I didn't shell out any extra money to see the movie in a "premium" format, so maybe it is cooler looking in IMAX, but to be honest, there wasn't really anything visually that I felt would have stood out. In terms of the cinematography, there are a few scenes here and there that pop—chief among them a chase scene through the jungles of Eternia—but there isn't really anything that made me say "wow". Seriously, Eternia itself is kind of *meh* looking (think of a less advanced, more rundown Asgard from the *Thor* franchise), Castle Grayskull looks exactly like it did in the show (like legit they might have used the castle from my uncle's basement), and the characters themselves *besides* Skeletor are just kind of bland looking (Skeletor looks okay here, but not nearly as cool as he did in the original film, especially at the end). I will say that it is pretty cool when Adam does become He-Man for the first time though.

The performances in this movie are somewhat unbalanced as well, in the sense that they are all over the place, and a lot of that can be attributed to the writing. Both **SIR** Idris Elba (I will *always* put the respect on that man's name) and Alison Brie ham it up, and it is wonderful, making me wish Brie was in more/had more to do. For his part as Adam/He-Man, I felt that Nicholas Galitzine played both parts the best that he could, but he is seemingly having way more fun as the dopey, dorky Adam as opposed to a confusingly written He-Man. The one actor that I must criticize here is Jared Leto, but I feel like he should only shoulder a part of the blame—the part where he constantly overacts *in everything that he does* since winning the Best Supporting Actor award in 2014. Leto's performance is shockingly reminiscent of Tom Hardy's Bane in *The Dark Knight Rises*, in the sense that whatever voice Leto decided to go with for the character is so muffled that half of the time you can barely understand what it is he is saying. While I have actually grown fond of Bane (I do a pretty good Bane impression when I'm drinking), I doubt that will be the case with Skeletor.

Not only are the two main characters written confusingly, but the entire tone of the movie feels uneven that way. The writers absolutely nailed the Prince Adam character: he was always kind of a goofy dork in the show, and you add in the angle of him now being the epitome of a working class stiff in “woke” corporate America, and it works perfectly. But He-Man should be the exact opposite—he should feel like a completely in control bad ass—and he doesn't. I understand that we get the version of Adam who is just becoming He-Man for the first time, but the fact of the matter is that He-Man himself is written pretty much the same as Adam right up until the final confrontation, where the writers decide to do this “ah ha, morality was *always* the point” type scene, which falls kind of flat. Skeletor suffers from the writers not knowing whether

they want to make him a more menacing version (a la Frank Langella's portrayal in the original version—which to this day is still pretty damned scary) or a more cartoon accurate, silly version. Personally, I would have gone full bad ass with both He-Man and Skeletor. **Minor spoiler here, so skip the next sentence if you don't want *any* spoilers:** if you are going to go silly Skeletor, then you *must* include a scene of him running away and yelling “until we meet again”—legit the only gag they left out from the film!

Honestly, the writing on this movie really took a lot of notes from *Guardians of the Galaxy*—all of the characters and jokes feel *exactly* like that movie, and it drags the entire production down because there is a distinct point in this movie where the stakes get raised, and it gets real, but the tone doesn't reflect that change.

At the end of the day, the *Masters of the Universe* we get is a pretty family friendly, fun version: parents who grew up with the *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe* cartoon will get enough of a nostalgia fix while showing their kids this movie that it justifies its existence. Nevertheless, I am left pondering what could have been had we gotten better visuals, and better written takes on the classic characters. So while the movie still deserves *a* viewing, I doubt it will extend to more than that, and sadly, I don't foresee it being a “smash hit”, nor relaunching the series in any meaningful way.