

The Wizard of Oz

After watching the excellent *Wicked*, I just heard that they already made a sequel, *The Wizard of Oz*! I had to watch it immediately. But seriously, the *Wizard of Oz* was one of my favorite book series growing up. Yes, a series. There are so many. When I reread them, I will also give them a review! L. Frank Baum was apparently pretty racist, so does that come through in the books or the movie? Probably, but I hope some of it is salvageable, especially my favorite character, Ozma the trans girl princess! But I think this movie is far enough removed from the author not to show signs of racism. We will see about the books.

Unfortunately, I would say that the story in this movie does not in fact live up to the book. I enjoyed the book characters really showing how they already have the attributes they want from the wizard, especially the Scarecrow. The Scarecrow is constantly coming up with plans that save the crew from various perils. The movie certainly does show the Tin Man's heart, but the Cowardly Lion seems to be exactly that, a coward, whereas in the book he shows off his courage while thinking he is a coward the whole time. In the movie, the poppies are waved away by the magic of Glinda, where in the book, the Tin Man and the Scarecrow have to work together to get the flesh-havers out of the situation. I think it involves previously befriended mice? I will report back after I reread the book. The point is, the second half of the movie suffers from feeling as if things happen and characters do things just to get from one scene to the next.

But who watches this movie for the story? Isn't it all about the costumes, sets and songs? Yes, the sets are amazing! And the costumes are perfect. It's wonderful to watch, like watching the most expensive stage production you've ever seen. And the songs—*Somewhere over the Rainbow*, *Follow the Yellow*—no that one is actually pretty annoying. The song the munchkins sing is—oh my god make it stop! But, *If I Only Had a Brain* is quite enjoyable, and the choreography is very fun. The Scarecrow does an excellent job making the audience feel that he actually is stuffed with straw. And then—wait, the Tin Man sings the same tune? And, oh no, so does the Lion? This is where I really felt the movie losing its momentum and pacing, which is not helped by the lion's dumb voice and honestly the worst costume out of the main characters. There is absolutely no good song after this. Do you remember the song they sing in the Emerald City? Neither do I. And do you remember that the Cowardly Lion has a song about becoming king of the jungle that he sings in the Emerald City? Why does the character with the absolute most annoying voice get a song that contributes nothing to the story?

Okay, but there are definitely good reasons to watch this movie. Every moment that Dorothy is in the spotlight is an absolute delight. Her face and demeanor are immensely expressive, and somehow she has chemistry with every character she meets. I feel for her plight as she fights for Toto in Kansas while everyone around her dismisses her concerns and gives in to, um, the witch, and "The Law." And her singing is out of this world. Holy shit I think this movie only made it big because of *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*. And it deserved that. If it's been a while since you've heard it, you should [listen to it](#) real quick. She definitely doesn't sound 16, let alone any younger, but nobody cares about that.

The Wicked Witch of the West is the other character to watch in this movie. So campy, so perfectly evil and wicked. And as a sequel to *Wicked*, watching the first scene with her and Glinda honestly works really well with that additional extra-canonical context. Which brings me to the politics of this movie. *Wicked* didn't just take an innocent story and twist it into making the witch the heroine. The political commentary was here from the start, and from that starting point, it's easy to start questioning the cracks in the story we are told. Should we really take the story at face value? I think it works well thinking of it as a propaganda piece to prop up Glinda, the Wizard, and the new illegitimate regime of the Scarecrow as ruler of Oz (Where is our favorite trans character and the rightful ruler of Oz, Ozma?).

Overall, I think this movie deserves a watch, but you might start to nod off at around the halfway point. But really, we should forgive this movie its faults. It's just a kid's movie, after all, and—oh my god, the monkeys! That is the creepiest thing I've ever seen! And we all watched this as kids? No wonder my childhood was so fucked.

4 stars out of 5. You have to watch it at least once in your adult life. Worthy successor to *Wicked*.

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