

Review #26 : *Jack the Giant Slayer* (2013)

Nicholas Hoult and Eleanor Tomlinson

Jack the Giant Slayer is a rousing, profoundly original and thoroughly entertaining family adventure. Director Bryan Singer, a first-rate cast and a stellar team of screenwriters, set designers and special-effects wizards have dusted off an old and — let's face it — never particularly compelling fairy tale and have given us a **great-looking thrill ride** in which we actually care about a number of characters...

Jack the Giant Slayer begins with the reading of a legend in two very different homes on **the same night**. Young Jack, a farm boy about 8 years old, has read the story so many times, the pages on his book have nearly worn away — yet he begs his kindly, widowed father to tell him the tale just one more time. Meanwhile, behind the walls of the castle Cloister, a princess in waiting eagerly absorbs the same story, read to her by her mother.



Ten years later, Jack has grown up to become Nicholas Hoult, a handsome and noble young man now living with his bitter old uncle after the plague.



Eleanor Tomlinson is Princess Isabelle, adventurous and romantic and incorrigible, who REALLY wishes she didn't have to marry the gross, old and obviously duplicitous Roderick — the great Stanley Tucci, hamming it up just shy of a mustache twirl. She also gets to wear two absolutely **astounding dresses** — a rose and green velvet one with yellow ribbons and a blue peacock satin one which are both amazing works...



It takes a few scenes before we get to the magic beans and the stalk that shoots to the sky and the mysterious land above Earth populated entirely by giants. But once we get there, game on ! Suspense is well delivered as we're first given progressive hints of the giant's presence : a bunch of crows flying away, the cattle running under the rain, cracks and footsteps in the forest... We then get a glimpse of one giant through water. Then we get to see the lot of them...

Giants are pretty awesome here. They're a grotesque bunch of louts cooking pigs in bread, which are literally pigs. In bread blankets. And humans too^^...



Of course, Jack is here to rescue the Princess and Belmont from their difficult position...



He always works out inventive and humorous plans which end up being great fun : killing the giant cook with his own knife, flying into his back from the ceiling of the kitchen... and... ah ! *the bees* of course : now that's not a very nice trick for sure...



The 3D makes special effects look even more impressive. On the giant kingdom, humans really look dwarfed and in Cloister, it really looks like little men are battling the giants, led by a two-headed general, Fallon, played by the **invaluable Bill Nighy**. There's no way you can have a fair fight between giants and men, so there's a convenient device to level the playing field : a **magic crown**. He who wears the crown has **complete command over the giants** and it's Roderick's plan to whip out the crown at the right moment and lead the giants to a conquest of Cloister and all kingdoms on Earth.



My favourite moment is when Jack jumps with his horse over the castle moats that have been set on fire for defence, and one of the Giants tries to catch him in the closing drawbridge. Part from being a particularly intense and dramatic moment, it's **visually stunning** +++

Jack the Giant Slayer is filled with neat touches, from the casting of Ewan McGregor as **Elmont**, a knight in shining armour who's supposed to be a hero in the story, but not THE hero, to an **epilogue that's just flat-out cool**. The PG-13 violence, including the gore explosion of a giant's body, means the action is a little too intense for *very young* children. But for everyone else, it's a terrific adventure. And, just for the spoiler, Nicholas's charming ending smile...



CONCLUSION

Here are 5 reasons to watch *Jack the Giant Slayer* :

1. **It's fun and light-hearted** without being condescendingly stupid or having potty humour. Despite this film's hefty body count, the characters consistently joke around and get themselves into shenanigans. You have adventure and a love story with no overt sexuality nor strutting egotism, and no inappropriate language.
2. **The action** ! The movie isn't afraid to be gory and scary. On the contrary, as a family film, the combination of mild violence and silliness makes it somewhat a fusion of the family films of the 60s or 80s.
3. **Great special effects**. No seemingly random 3D FX 5.
4. **It has an excellent and smart script** : no politically correct messages or characters, good ties-in and echoes throughout the film ('*There's someone behind me, is there?*') and I love how the movie ends up being related to the modern world.
5. **The cast gives their all, especially Nicholas Hoult**. Here he brings to Jack the same charm and timidity he gave to R in *Warm Bodies*. I feel that he has the capability and likability to carry a movie as the lead role, and I look forward to his future endeavours...