

Back to the Black Hole

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Disney has decided to start the process of remaking the 1979 clunker “the Black Hole” by utilizing the talent of the other Disney old-tech reboot, “Tron: Legacy”. Joseph Kosinski (director), Sean Bailey (producer), and Travis Beacham (screenwriter) are going to try to give the “Event Horizon” predecessor a serious make-over.

From a business point of view, it kind of makes sense. We’re back at that phase of history where space is fascinating again. We’re discovering planets outside of our own system, we’re learning more about the integration of relativistic and quantum models in physics (important for understanding black holes in particular), and there’s even talk from the White House (very quietly, admittedly) about another moon mission or more space work. The science fiction trend recently has been awfully cartoon-y (and, in some cases, just awful), so maybe it really is time to dust off one of the original “outward thinking” scripts of the science fiction boom.

Frankly, for the outrageous budget Disney had for “the Black Hole” at the time (\$20 million), it pretty well bombed at the box office. It only reads as doing more than breaking even now, thirty years later, and there’s really no way to dress it up for re-release as Disney is doing for most of its other older titles (“Sleeping Beauty”, “Little Mermaid”, etc.). There was the 25th anniversary VHS/DVD release five years ago, but all that really did was bring back the embarrassment of what was, honestly, a boring and kind of creepy movie.

That’s right, I said it. “Boring”. Being boring is the cardinal sin of any movie, period, and “the Black Hole”, for all its resonant sci-fi themes, was just... not that exciting. It was slightly disturbing, it was darker than normal fare for “kid movies”, but I think Disney was having something of an identity crisis at the time. On one hand, they had the “family movie” reputation to try to honor, but they were really trying to go in a different direction. I never considered “the Black Hole” to be a kids’ movie, but maybe it got lumped in thanks to the Disney name. I even remember my parents talking about it and deciding that it was a little too much for the likes of me (and I was precocious).

Is this going to be a good move for them? Given the box office and craft-worthy success of their recent titles (“Race to Witch Mountain” being the most immediately memorable), this could be a good move. I just hope “Tron: Legacy” doesn’t get short-changed with the talents’ split attention.

