

F i l m

# Happy ever after



It's the end of an era for Potter fans. **Alex Baker** reports from the red carpet

**T**EN YEARS on from the first film and 14 years since the first book, the final part of the Harry Potter story has at last been told. There are enough Potter fans out there for whom the movies are their only source of reference to prevent this review from exposing all the secrets revealed in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2*. Those who've lovingly read the books, well, they know what to expect. You won't be disappointed.

Having at long last been allowed to unravel plot twists which have kept characters and viewers mystified, the director and screenwriter have all the confident joy of children given the go-ahead to open presents on Christmas morning.

Where *Part 1* felt like a meandering walk through the Forest of Dean, *Part 2* is tight, tense and thrilling throughout, never dropping the ball (or the wand) whether in action or drama.

Emotional moments which have been building up for years are given the due attention they deserve. Climactic battles scenes? They will blow you away in 3-D. While not all the secrets are explained, so many are that it would be pedantic to pick out those which aren't.

Rowling has never been in danger of being awarded the Orange Prize for fiction, but what she lacks in writing depth she more than makes up for in ideas, characters and a genuinely magical ability to conjure up a parallel world of witches, wizards and muggles.

Here is also a mind at work which delights in the themes of very traditional storytelling: loyalty, love and perseverance are key qualities in the characters she so dearly admires.

Pride, fear and weakness are almost always at the root of those who've strayed into the dark arts. No one is inherently evil. Even Voldemort, the archetypal villain, is given a back story which allows for some sympathy.

Second chances play a big role in Rowling's philosophy. There are few who are beyond redemption – a view which I've always felt ought to dissuade those keen



Picture: Alex Baker

Julie Walters talks to the press on the red carpet

to boycott her books because of her use of witches, et al.

In addition, she clearly places great value on the power of sacrificial love – a theme explored in the earlier books where it's given literal power and explored again through the actions of Harry and his comrades in this latest film. Rowling, it seems, understands the eternal, indestructible nature of love.

Harry and his friends, as the story goes, are searching for a way to kill their nemesis, Voldemort, a mission made more difficult because he's split his soul into seven parts. This quest, which began in *Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince*, is complicated by the Deathly Hallows – three objects which Voldemort would like since they could help him cheat death and become the most powerful wizard in the world.

What all the other films lacked were the special moments of intimacy and insight which the last one, by virtue of being allowed to reveal all, has in bucket loads. As such, it's very rewarding.

The lazy received wisdom of the Potter films has always been to remark, 'The latest Potter? Well, it's a lot darker, isn't it?' While the films have become more adult in their levels of violence, it's really only the last two which could claim to explore the darker realms of inner pain. If nothing else, the films have literally

become darker. Some scenes lack light to the degree that I feel like shouting 'lumos' at the screen in the vain hope that one of their wands will light up.

I was able to attend the World Premiere in Trafalgar Square where, alongside journalists from across the world, *The Baptist Times* met the likes of Julie Walters, Jason Isaacs, Maggie Smith, Rupert Grint and watched as Alan Rickman and Ralph Fiennes strode along the red carpet.

More than one eyebrow was raised when the name of the newspaper was mentioned. Perhaps the Christians denouncing witchcraft in Leicester Square had left a bad taste in their mouths. I was glad I could demonstrate that Christians can also enjoy stories, which are – and I risk being called a heretic by Potter fans – merely stories.

No matter how well written they are, and let's remember that these aren't, Potter is as likely to turn you to witchcraft as playing on the Xbox will turn you into a serial-killing sniper.

*HP7* (as the posters like to brand the final film) is not a movie for non-Potter fans. But if you've watched at least four of the previous seven then this concluding episode will feel extremely satisfying.

• *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2* is out on general release, certificate 12A

## THE FINAL WORD

PAUL SHEPPY

### Bill is retiring – and that is final

**A** FRIEND of mine has reached pensionable age and decided to retire. He has ministered in churches that most would regard as thriving and has seen growth in numbers and in depth of common life and in outward vision. He has led two ministry teams and is what is commonly described as a good minister – I certainly think he is.

He is still full of visionary ideas, he still preaches well, he is still greatly loved by those he serves, and not a few have asked why he is stopping. Another minister at a similar stage of life and with a similar record will not countenance retirement. He thinks that he has many a mile left in him and wants to keep going.

My friend Bill (not his real name – so apologies to any Bill out there) thinks differently. He feels the need to stop, to take time out and to think. He believes that another generation can take on the task that he has discharged for 40 years, and that he must begin to ask what new thing God has for him.

My friend, you see, is tired. Ministry may have been his gift and his life, but it has not been without loss and pain. His family have moved when it seemed right to take a new church, but the moving has meant friendships bruised and roots pulled up. He has gone to a new church and discovered that while the deacons said everyone wanted to reach out into the neighbourhood, few were ready for the disruption and effort that this sort of change demands.

The energy that loving people into a new mindset demands has drained him. Retreats and sabbaticals have helped, but the call on his reserves has been immense over the years and he feels the need to stop.

Already, he is being asked to do things: moderate a church in its pastoral vacancy, lead a visit to the Holy Land, start a home-study bible group, help a local ministers group plan their next Lent course.

I asked Bill if he was really retiring. He grinned. I told him it was not a laughing matter. If he really wants to be still and find God, then he should say so clearly – and if Christian people cannot hear that, too bad.

God may have much for Bill to do, but first Bill needs time to hear again that still, small voice.

## CAKE OR DEATH

by alex baker



Saved



Not saved



You've never heard of the Bible?

AOP

IF EVANGELICALS REVISED EMOTICONS

See more cartoons at <http://cakeordeathcartoon.wordpress.com/>

The Baptist Times – incorporating The Baptist and The Freeman. Registered at the Post Office as a newspaper. FRIDAY, JULY 15, 2011. No 8388 Vol. No. 156. Tel: Editorial, Didcot: (01235) 517672; Advertising: (01932) 243108; Subscriptions: (01235) 517738; Fax: Didcot: (01235) 517678. UK subscription – £53 a year including postage. Views expressed in letters and articles are not necessarily those of the newspaper. Printed by Newbury News Limited, Newspaper House, Faraday Road, Newbury, Berkshire. RG14 2DW. Published by Baptist Times Ltd, PO Box 54, 129 Broadway, Didcot, OXON, OX11 8XB.



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