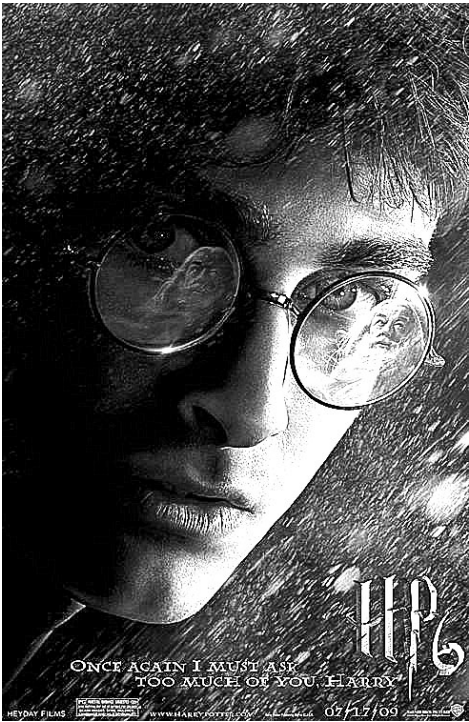


# Entertainment



## HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE

A teenage wizard must contend with his romantic longings and that of others while trying to find out what evil is afoot at his school in this sixth installment of the Harry Potter series. Drama/Adventure, PG.

Having survived a perilous encounter with a powerful and evil dark lord, teen wizard Harry Potter (Daniel Radcliffe) returns to Hogwarts with headmaster Professor Dumbledore (Michael Gambon), but not before a side trip where the latter convinces former professor Horace Slughorn (Jim Broadbent) to return to the school. Dumbledore is convinced Horace knows more than he's letting on about former student Tom Riddle's (Hero Fiennes-Tiffin & Frank Dillane) eventual transformation into Lord Voldemort, and assigns Harry the task of learning that truth.

With Death Eaters such as Bellatrix Lestrange (Helena Bonham Carter) and Fenrir Greyback (Dave Legeno) attempting to fulfill Voldemort's grand plan by wreaking havoc on the outside world and trying to infiltrate Hogwarts, Harry knows he doesn't have much time. And he's clearly suspicious of rival student Draco Malfoy (Tom Felton) whose mother and Lestrange have convinced Professor Severus Snape (Alan Rickman) to pledge his undying protection over the teen.

At the same time, and as other Hogwarts regulars such as Professor Minerva McGonagall (Maggie Smith) and groundskeeper Rubeus Hagrid (Robbie Coltrane) go about their business, Harry must contend with his growing romantic feelings for Ginny (Bonnie Wright), the sister of one of his best friends, Ron Weasley (Rupert Grint). He's smitten with Lavender Brown (Jessie Cave), a development that doesn't sit well with their third friend, Hermione Granger (Emma Watson), who has her sights set on Ron but must contend with fellow student Cormac McLaggen (Freddie Stroma) having his on her.

As those romantic issues play out, Harry continues his undercover work for Dumbledore in trying to figure out what Horace, the new Potions master, knows about Tom Riddle and whether there's any connection to the seemingly shady behavior that Draco is displaying.

Our take: 6 out of 10

Summer lovin' had me a blast  
Summer lovin' happened so fast  
I met a girl crazy for me  
Met a boy cute as can be  
Summer days driftin' away, to uh-oh those summer nights

The opening lyrics to a memorable ditty from a more than 30-year-old movie musical might seem like an odd way to begin a review about the sixth installment of the venerable Harry Potter movie series. Yet, it's quite appropriate considering that the young kids we were first introduced to in the original 2001

film have now grown up into teens and are experiencing the ever-intensified joys and angst of adolescent puppy love.

Heck, rather than be titled "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince" this easily could have been named "Harry Potter and the Hormonal Rage." But diehard fans shouldn't get their Quidditch brooms all in a knot thinking that director David Yates (who helmed "Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix") and screenwriter Steve Kloves (who penned all of the Potter films save for that fifth work) have taken author J.K. Rowling's novel and turned it into teen tiger beat pulp or, worse yet, something akin to "Twilight."

And that's because while romance is clearly in the air, something dark and sinister is still afoot in the halls and grounds of Hogwarts and elsewhere. Following Harry's climatic confrontation with Voldemort last time around, he shows up weary and a bit bloodied, while the Death Eaters are wreaking havoc out in the real world, including making London's Millennium Bridge akin to the famous Tacoma Narrows Bridge on steroids.

Evil poster boy Draco Malfoy is still up to no good, and Professor Dumbledore rehires former professor Horace Slughorn and then wants our title hero to do some undercover intel on him to find out what he remembers (or not) about a certain troubled student before he grew up into the despised lead villain. Throw in all of the "he likes her, but she likes him" teen romantic angst, and the stage would seem set for an uneven and even melodramatic outing (Disclaimer -- I haven't read the source novel or any of the rest of the series).

Thankfully, all of those involved in front of and behind the camera nicely balance the seemingly disparate elements, resulting in a good (but not brilliant) and fairly entertaining offering that thankfully doesn't just feel like filler as was the case -- at least for yours truly -- with "Order of the Phoenix."

While some of the material has apparently been trimmed down (resulting in the unexpected return to a PG rating after the last few have been PG-13, although this one easily could and probably should have received the same), the action scenes and moments of peril are decently handled. And yes, the various small details and supporting characters all make yet another return, although some of both sets have lost some of their figurative magic by now, due to overuse and repetition.

It's the main cast, however, that really makes the film work. By now, they're all obviously quite comfortable in their roles, and the likes of Michael Gambon and especially Alan Rickman still delight in their parts, while Jim Broadbent is quite good as the latest addition that's a mixture of comedy and pathos.

Although Daniel Radcliffe, Rupert Grint and Emma Watson are starting to look a little old for their roles, they take them to entertaining new heights, what with those pesky teen hormones messing with their feelings, behavior and better judgment. It doesn't feel fake and overwrought as occurred in "Twilight" and instead comes off as fairly natural and thus - benefitting the overall film -- engaging for all viewers.

As usual, the production design is stellar and the special effects first-rate, while composer Nicholas Hooper expands upon John Williams' signature chordal themes. The entire endeavor might have cost a lot of money (reportedly in the \$250 million range), but at least it shows up on the screen.

While it's a bit long (at 150+ minutes) and occasionally drags a bit here and there, the film should appease diehard fans while being accessible enough to entertain casual viewers who aren't completely versed in all things HP. "Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince" more than adequately greases the stage for the upcoming two-part finale and thus rates as a 6 out of 10. Courtesy of Screenit.com •

# Curbside



## DODGE CHALLENGER SE

By Anthony B. Barthel

Dodge Challenger SE Review - Get Your Kicks

A lot of things in life just don't make any sense. Duck billed platypus? Black light (which is it)? Full-size two-door cars. Sometimes you have to just take things for granted because they're here. But despite not making much sense, there is a definite case for the full-size two-door Dodge Challenger.

Part of my evaluation of any vehicle includes just gauging the reaction of others and the Challenger certainly elicited responses from people. Considering how much early 1970s Dodge Challengers are commanding at auction nowadays, it's no wonder that Dodge decided to bring back the name and the look during these, uh, interesting times.

**What's Hot**

The Challenger is based on the same pieces that give us the Dodge Charger and Chrysler 300 so the driving experience won't surprise anyone who's driven either of those very popular cars. There are three variants of the Challenger; an SE which have a 250 horsepower V6 mated to a four-speed automatic, the R/T that gets its motivation from a 5.7-liter Hemi V8 rated at 370 horsepower and 398 pound-feet of torque with the standard five-speed automatic (power increases to 375 hp and 404 pound-feet of torque on premium fuel with the optional six-speed manual/Track Pak group) and the Hemi uses a multiple displacement feature that switches off cylinders to save fuel, but EPA ratings are 16/23 mpg with the automatic and 15/23 mpg with the six-speed manual.

Not enough of a kick in the pants for you? There's the SRT8 which comes with a 425-hp 6.1-liter Hemi, the same transmission options as the R/T, big Brembo brakes, the firmest suspension; and a limited-slip rear differential.

If you own one you'll need all that go fast because you're going to be spending a lot of time answering people's questions every time you stop.

"Is that the new Challenger?"

"Yes, hence the badge on the car that reads, 'Challenger.'"

"Is it as fun to drive as the original?"

"Better - it's fast and it's comfortable. And sexy. Plus I can plug in my iPod."

"Mind if I drive it?"

"Why, yes, I do!"

While this car has all the styling attitude of the original, it's got the benefit of being a modern car with great brakes, comfortable seats and modern electronics. Unlike the olden days, a modern car starts reliably and is a good traveling companion no matter your altitude or the weather.

Even though this wasn't the SRT8 model, the V6 offered reasonably balanced performance

that made this a fun car to drive on local twisty mountain roads. I'd love to see a turbocharged V6 model that had lots of power and good fuel economy and, who knows, maybe someone at Chrysler is thinking the same thing.

What's the point of a full-size, two-door car? Well, at first I was asking myself that very question. But then you look at all the cars available today and a two-door is really distinctive. This would be a wonderful car on a road trip, such as one along Route 66. It's comfortable and roomy but has a very distinctive style and balances the line between solid handling and comfortable ride very well, thank you.

Sure, you could buy an old Challenger at auction for about the same price, or more, but you wouldn't have things like a great UConnect Bluetooth phone system, satellite radio, climate control and all those features we thought were sissy features in our teens but, it turns out, really do make driving that much more pleasurable.

**What's Not**

Okay, I'll admit that I lust after the big V8 and the fact that there were only six cylinders under the hood was kind of a bummer. But 250 horses is nothing to sneeze at and decent fuel economy isn't a bad thing either.

I did think that some of the interior materials were a bit, uh, economical looking but this car is supposed to be a re-creation of a car that had its own affordable interior materials so maybe that's the explanation. I think the build quality of the car and the interior is such that it will hold up long enough that this car may command big bucks at auctions eventually.

**In Summary**

Cars are becoming ever more practical driving appliances with the outrageous, for-the-fun-of-it styling and performance becoming a thing of our youth. Fortunately there are a still a few car people at the vehicle manufacturers who know that, despite the lack of pure practicality, a full-size two-door car that just looks hot is really a good thing. And, all things considered, driving a V6 Challenger along Route 66 would be one wonderful, memorable vacation. •

