

Dark Shadows

reviewed by [Steve A. Vineberg](#) in the [June 27, 2012](#) issue

Dark Shadows, Tim Burton's film of the popular camp-gothic soap opera from the '60s and early '70s, is silly and over the top. But it has a marvelous, billowing look (courtesy of cinematographer Bruno Delbonnel), and it's quite entertaining. Barnabas Collins (Johnny Depp), imprisoned in a coffin by a witch (Eva Green) after she'd first turned him into a vampire, is unearthed in a Maine fishing village after 200 years and sets out to restore his dilapidated family (Michelle Pfeiffer is the current matriarch) to grandeur.

Seth Grahame-Smith's script doesn't have much craft: characters drift in and out of focus, as if the movie kept remembering suddenly that they exist. But the actors look like they're having a grand time, even if most of them don't have much to do.

As for Depp, he's a marvel. His performance is premised on two running gags: the tension between Barnabas's gentlemanly politesse and his thirst for blood, and his quizzical response to the accoutrements of the modern world. (The film is set in 1972.) The first thing Barnabas sees as he emerges from the grave is a huge, illuminated McDonald's sign, which he takes to be the gaze of the devil: "M" for Mephistopheles. He's peerlessly funny.