

## “ABRAHAM LINCOLN: VAMPIRE HUNTER” (Movie Review)

Written by John Nicol

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ABRAHAM LINCOLN: VAMPIRE HUNTER is going to be a tough sell for the average viewer; the title alone is going to be a deterrent for many. Ultimately, this is a love-it-or-loathe-it type of adventure, and judging by the reaction at the Toronto press screening, those sentiments seem to be split down the middle. If you can commit to the absurdity of the idea, you'll be in for one hell of a rip-roaring adventure that will not disappoint; if you can't stomach the premise and let go of the obvious historical incongruity involving one of America's most beloved historical figures, you may end up rejecting it.

LINCOLN is, at its core, a tale of one man's tormented past, one which fuels and inspires his future as a revolutionary. As a youth, Lincoln discovers that there is a darkness lurking amongst the shadows of America—vampires—when he witnesses the murder of his mother by a nasty bloodsucker. This sets in motion Abe's lust for revenge against the vampire race and his mother's destroyer, Jack Barts (Marton Csokas).



Jump ahead several years, and the older Abraham, brilliantly played by relative film newcomer and stage actor Benjamin Walker, bumps into his soon-to-be mentor Henry Sturgess (Dominic

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Cooper from CAPTAIN AMERICA: THE FIRST AVENGER). Henry immediately sizes up Abraham when he sees how underprepared and unskilled the revenge-driven future president is in handling a confrontation with the undead. Abraham's encounter provides the basis for his unconventional and blossoming friendship with Henry, who becomes Abe's trainer and advisor on the dispatching of vampires. While ax-deep into ghoulish killing, Lincoln uncovers some gruesome truths: He learns that Adam, the first vampire (Rufus Sewell), is importing slaves and harvesting them as food. This knowledge becomes a driving force in Lincoln's professional development, as he starts to pursue a career as a lawyer that evolves into a life in politics. We get to see the man's story unfold in the manner that history recorded—all while combating the vampire menace. The entire mad enterprise culminates on the plains of Gettysburg and on a train full of munitions, leading to a finale that is among the most explosive, jaw-dropping climaxes this critic has ever seen.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN: VAMPIRE HUNTER is equal parts fact and fictional extrapolation of the story we all know so well, and the invented elements in Seth Grahame-Smith's script (based on his best-selling novel) easily slip into the gaps of history. Perhaps we never really knew what motivated Lincoln to create the Emancipation Proclamation; freeing the living from the undead seems like a pretty good collateral reason! There is so much to love here: the acting is solid, often campy but always played straight. Humor is sporadically injected throughout, and it easily lightens the tension. The tension is expertly handled by director Timur Bekmambetov, who respects the vampire mythos. The 3D is brilliantly executed, the visual effects are mind-blowing, the fight choreography is poetic, the scare factor even works and the vampires are properly menacing.

Which is not to say that ABRAHAM LINCOLN: VAMPIRE HUNTER is a perfect film; some of the dialogue is contrived, and there's a ridiculous stampede sequence in which Abe and Barts face off again—seriously, suspension of disbelief can only go so far. There are also a few elements that lack closure or plot resolution; maybe this is a case of missing scenes that may reappear in a director's cut on Blu-ray. But for the most part, these are minor complaints, and nothing that really impacts the enjoyment of this wild cinematic ride, a perfectly original entry in a summer filled with seemingly unlimited sequels and remakes.

