

Denis Villeneuve's *Dune*: A visual feast deserving of the big screen

 By [Charles Siboto](#)

12 Nov 2021

Denis Villeneuve's take on Frank Herbert's 1965 novel, *Dune* might be the reason to return to your local cinema.



Although the film has been released in a hybrid theatrical/HBO Max format, the big screen (Imax if possible) is where it shines. *Dune* is a beautiful film with almost every shot being a work of art.

A promising iteration

The books have been famously difficult to translate to screen, what with David Lynch's 1984 adaptation that even he considers a failure (cult status aside). John Harrison's 2000 miniseries fared better and covered the first three books in Herbert's series but it also wasn't the grand spectacle (and budget) the story deserves. Alejandro Jodorowsky's fourteen-hour adaptation of the book didn't even make it to screen and became the subject of a documentary film in 2013.

Villeneuve's turn at a theatrical version is promising and sticks largely to the source material, but does take liberties in an attempt to streamline the story. The budget is big and the casting is star-studded. One of the issues with Lynch's version was the runtime. His original cut was over five hours long and the studio cut that down to just over two hours. Villeneuve's *Dune* is part 1 of 2, which gives it room to breathe.

Storyline

The story follows Paul Atreides portrayed by Hollywood's soft leading man, Timothée Chalamet. Paul is the son of Duke Leto Atreides (Oscar Isaac), ruler of the ocean planet Caladan, and his concubine, Lady Jessica. This story is as much Lady Jessica's as it's Paul's. Rebecca Ferguson is brilliant in the role of Paul's mother and acolyte of the mystical all-female order, the Bene Gesserit.

House Atreides is assigned to the desert planet Arrakis by the Emperor to take over the mining of Spice Melange from their rivals, House Harkonnen, who have been in control of the planet for 80 years. Stellan Skarsgård plays the evil Baron Vladimir Harkonnen and steals every scene he appears in. He is a menacing presence throughout the film. The good vs evil structure is rather simplistic. Everyone under the Atreides banner is good and everyone under the Harkonnen banner is evil.

Spice Melange is the most valuable substance in the universe because of its ability to unlock prescience, which is required for space travel. Spice can only be found on Arrakis and whoever controls it wields great power. Mining spice is a dangerous operation, though, as Arrakis is home to giant sandworms.

The promotion of House Atreides isn't the gift it seems, though, and there is scheming in the background by Baron Harkonnen and the Emperor, who has grown jealous of Leto Atreides's popularity. Leto suspects a trap but believes that he can make an alliance with the Fremen, Arrakis's native population, who suffered under House Harkonnen's rule.

Stellar cast

The film is brilliantly cast with beloved House Atreides characters like swordmaster Duncan Idaho (Jason Momoa), weapons master Gurney Halleck (Josh Brolin), Dr Yueh (Chang Chen) and Mentat Thufir Hawat (Stephen McKinley Henderson) adding depth and personality to the characters from the book and fleshing them out for the screen.

Baron Harkonnen's villainous retinue consists of his nephew, the cruel Glossu Rabban (Dave Bautista) and the Twisted Mentat, Piter De Vries (the weird kind of role that suits David Dastmalchian perfectly). The Fremen play a big role in moving the story forward and Javier Bardem's portrayal of Stilgar is one of the best in the film.

Sharon Duncan-Brewster plays a genderswapped Dr. Liet-Kynes and Zendaya's Chani plays a smaller role in this first part of *Dune*, which will be fleshed out in the second part. Speaking of the second part, this film ends quite abruptly if you didn't know that there's meant to be a second part.



SA film *Barakat* in the running for an Oscar

9 Nov 2021



Visual feast

Dune a visual feast in every aspect, from Caladan, the lush homeworld of the House Atreides to the industrial nightmare landscape of Giedi Prime, the homeworld of House Harkonnen, and the inhospitable Imperial prison planet Salusa Secundus where the Sardaukar military force is trained.

Most of the focus is, obviously, on the desert planet Arrakis, which is beautiful to behold, right from the opening shot with the spice floating in the air. Although the film is huge in scale, Villeneuve has a fine eye for detail on a smaller scale as well.

This is the best version of Herbert's book ever adapted to film and if the second part can be as good or better, Denis Villeneuve's take will be the definitive *Dune*.

ABOUT CHARLES SIBOTO

Charles Siboto is a delightful, youngish person. He firmly believes that kindness matters and cannot abide people who are asshats.

- *Dune: Part Two* review: expansive, enigmatic and exceptional - 22 Mar 2024
- Unveiling *Oppenheimer* on screen: A journey into brilliance - 18 Sep 2023
- *Barbie*: A whimsical and empowering cinematic odyssey. - 23 Aug 2023
- Denis Villeneuve's *Dune*: A visual feast deserving of the big screen - 12 Nov 2021
- #YouthMatters: General disappointment, anti-vaxxers, conspiracy theories and misinformation - 22 Jun 2021

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>