



Clockwise from main: Mossasaurus attack; Dino danger; Isabella Sermon as Maisie Lockwood; Pratt versus predator.

[FILM]

JURASSIC WORLD DOMINION

★★★

OUT NOW
CERT 12A / 147 MINS

DIRECTOR Colin Trevorrow

CAST Chris Pratt, Bryce Dallas Howard, Laura Dern, Sam Neill, Jeff Goldblum, BD Wong, Mamoudou Athie, Dichen Lachman, DeWanda Wise

PL01 Ex-Jurassic World workers Owen Grady (Pratt) and Claire Dearing (Howard) search for their adopted clone daughter Maisie (Sermon) and velociraptor Blue's baby, both kidnapped by poachers plying the illegal dinosaur trade. Meanwhile, palaeobotanist Ellie Sattler (Dern) recruits old friend Alan Grant (Neill) to infiltrate the shady goings on at genetics company Biosyn.

AT THE END OF J.A. Bayona's *Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom*, dinosaurs and humans start living side by side. While this sadly doesn't mean velociraptors are now Uber drivers (always give them five stars) or stegosauresses have decent jobs in IT, it does offer a mouth-watering premise for *Jurassic World Dominion* to explore: two species separated by 65 million years forced

to rub along together with no electric fences or Bob Peck to contain the carnage. It's an idea that Colin Trevorrow's franchise finale ultimately ignores, choosing to once again hem in its characters in confined studio-bound forests and dark corridors. It's a messy, overstuffed affair but delivers dollops of dino goodness, elevated by the return of franchise holy trinity Sam Neill, Laura Dern and Jeff Goldblum.

If Spielberg's original is about the beauty of the slow burn, *Dominion* starts at full pelt, throwing in sea-bound mayhem, a dinosaur rescue and a Wild West-style cattle drive, only with parasurolophuses. Two plot lines emerge — one a dive into the illicit dinosaur black market, the other an almost secret-agent story involving genetically modified prehistoric locusts — unified by the corporation Biosyn founded by Lewis Dodgson (Campbell Scott) of "Dodgson! It's Dodgson!" first-film fame. You should never trust a company with 'sin' baked into the name.

Dotted throughout are fillips of great action scenes, from a thrilling foot-chase and a motorbike pursuit in Malta, to a winged serpent taking down an aircraft and a feathered dinosaur (finally) slithering under ice. The best of the bunch is a quieter, more suspenseful sequence as Claire (Bryce Dallas Howard) takes refuge underwater with a huge beastie stalking above. But the film is at its best when focused on its original trio. It's lovely to see Dern, Neill and Goldblum sharing the same frame, the dynamic of the serious scientists exasperated by the rock-star chaotician still gloriously intact.

Goldblum in particular adds swagger and levity to a film in danger of becoming po-faced (it's a great touch that Malcolm slid into Ellie's DMS in the intervening years — of course he did). It also provides a sharp contrast to the relatively colourless heroes of the later trilogy, Chris Pratt seemingly leaking charisma from film to film and Howard bereft of a character trait you can grasp onto (at least the running in high heels was a thing).

Too many characters hinder investment, an over-abundance of critters (the CG ones look better than the animatronics) dilute the power of a singular Big Bad and the speechifying is occasionally cackhanded, making you pine for the elegant exposition of Mr. DNA. Some of the callbacks are clumsily handled — an iconic Laura Dern moment is squandered early — while some deliver exactly the right frisson; the distinctive sound of dilophosauresses filling a night sky is thrilling. "It never gets old," says Sattler about the joys of studying dinosaurs but what's absent here is the series' staple of wonder and awe. If we are living in a *Jurassic* world where dinosaurs are presented as that workaday, now might be the time to stop.

IAN FREER

VERDICT If it doesn't hit the *Top Gun: Maverick* heights of legacy sequels, *Jurassic World Dominion* is scattershot but entertaining, with fun, familiar set-pieces. Come for the delight in seeing Neill, Dern and Goldblum together again; stay for when the bloke on a scooter gets eaten.