IT throwback review

Look, when this movie came out, it was a different time. It’s simply impossible to judge a movie (or anything for that matter) with any degree of fairness when stripped of its historical context. I was far too young to remember how *It* was received at the time of its original airing; for all I know it was a total game changer. I remembered enjoying it when I was a kid, and in preparation for the remake I took the liberty of giving the original miniseries (staring Tim Curry as the menacing Demon clown) another viewing. Here’s how I saw it:

The 1990’s version of It holds up worse than a fingerless gunman. For all of Pennywise’s offbeat Beetlejuiceing, he ultimately comes off more like an annoying sibling waving his finger inches from your face than a legitimate threat. That compounded with the over the top bravado of the school bullies left the whole enterprise feeling like an afterschool special.

As the movie goes on, the protagonists, now middle aged are left with only vague recollections of their childhood memories of It and that chapter of their life. As they regroup in their hometown - the scene of the crime - they slowly begin to remember old details and the movies middle act becomes largely about marshalling each other’s courage and convincing themselves to not flee. In this way, I guess it could be said, the movie was affective. Emotionally I followed that trajectory alongside them. As my memories of previous viewings steadily came back into focus and lines and events came flooding back to me, I too required a string of pep talks to keep from fleeing. As we rev into the climax, obligatory fat kid, Max, announces “The whole town’s ‘It’ in a way” laying out what we’ll call the underlying message: cowardice and apathy are the real evil. Well when it comes to the later, as far as the movies concerned, I guess I’m a pennywise. And the cost of an online rental short.

By the time the final credits role, the film’s iconic scene of a flimsy paper boat sailing rockily, inevitably into a sewer almost seems meta.

It’s been far too long since my last reading of the novel in which this film was adapted, so I can’t speak with confidence as to whether or not the movie did the book justice, but here’s to hoping it didn’t.

PRESCRIPTION:

For a better version: watch the remake.