

# Kenneth Branagh takes us on mysterious boat ride in 'Death on the Nile'



CHENNAI: Much like Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, whose sleuthing Sherlock Holmes cracked crime cases through bewilderingly mysterious methods, Agatha Christie's creation, Hercule Poirot, has been as much a legend. Christie, who was born in 1890 about 20 years after Doyle, actually borrowed from Holmes to give her Belgian investigator an enduringly inspiring character. It is not, therefore, surprising that Christie's stories, like Doyle's, have been adapted to the big screen and television. Admittedly, both Holmes and Poirot have had greater success on the small screen. But Sidney Lumet's 1974 "Murder on the Orient Express," based on Christie's 1934 book, was almost irresistible. It won many Oscar nods and even fetched a win for Ingrid Bergman.



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In comparison, Kenneth Branagh's retelling of the story in his 2017 film, despite lavish production values and a tense screenplay, could not quite match up to Lumet's. However, Branagh's latest foray into the Christie world with "Death on the Nile" (first published in 1937), now on Disney+, is a vast improvement on his earlier tryst with the author.

The drama transports us to the Nile in Egypt on the luxurious riverboat steamer, the S.S. Karnak, which is hosting a dozen vacationers, including Linnet Ridgeway (Gal Gadot) and Simon Doyle (Armie Hammer), and Poirot (Branagh) himself, who has been taken off his much-anticipated holiday by the newlyweds. They are terribly scared that Linnet's jilted best friend Jacqueline (Emma Mackey) would harm them, and the detective himself is a bit shaken when he finds her unexpectedly on board with a revolver inside her handbag.

Branagh sticks to Christie's story, though he updates some details like the telltale red paint and elaborates perhaps more effectively on plot detours like Tiffany's necklace, a jealous blue-suited doctor (Russel Brand) and Linnet's cousin and business assistant (Ali Fazal), who comes off as a slimy suspect in the string of onboard murders.

But Christie being Christie, her narration must end in a grand finale with Poirot assembling all the men and women before pointing his finger at the villain of the piece.

All in all, "Death on the Nile" is an exciting whodunit that is worth a watch.

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