OPINIONS

‘Black Phone 2’ was an impressive sequel

By Jay’Mi Vazquez
Managing Editor

“Black Phone 2” arrived in theaters on Oct. 17 with a gripping mix of supernatural horror, psychological weight and emotional suspense that built on the first film.

“The Black Phone,” released in 2021, introduced audiences to a disturbing depiction of a Colorado suburb.

The sequel expands that world in bold and unexpected ways. It not only revives the eerie tension of the first film but also explores the emotional cost of survival, revealing how trauma can linger long after the immediate threat has passed.

Once again directed by Scott Derrickson, “Black Phone 2” opens shortly after Finney escaped from the Grabber. The film focused on Finney’s attempt to return to normal life, portraying the quiet horror of living with fear and guilt.

Rather than relying solely on traditional jump scares, Derrickson emphasized the psychological side of terror, showing that true fear often exists in memory and in the mind.

Finney’s search for peace and his desire to honor the children who never made it home form the emotional center of the story.

One of the sequel’s most notable strengths lies in its expanded supernatural mythology.

Finney’s sister, Gwen, and their late mother, Hope, share a mysterious dream-based power that connects them to the spirit world. This element, briefly explained in the first film, becomes the driving force of the sequel.

The story explores where these powers come from and what they truly mean, creating a stronger bridge between the physical and spiritual realms. The use of dreams as both a source of hope and fear adds a new layer of intrigue to the narrative.

Ethan Hawke’s return as the Grabber is another one of the film’s standout elements. Although his character’s death appeared at the end of the first film, his reemergence here challenges the boundary between reality and the supernatural.

Now existing as a dream demon, the Grabber takes on a haunting presence that recalls classic horror icons such as Freddy Krueger. Hawke delivers a chilling performance, transforming the Grabber into a figure who is equally terrifying and tragic, embodying both nightmare and memory.

Despite these strong points, “Black Phone 2” encounters several of the same issues that trouble many sequels. It succeeds in answering lingering questions from the original but struggles with pacing and structure.

The first half focuses heavily on exposition and backstory, which slows the momentum, while the second half mirrors the original film’s climax too closely.

Once again, Finney and the spirits of the lost children unite to defeat the Grabber, a conclusion that feels predictable despite the emotional payoff.

The film also suffers from a few logical inconsistencies.

While the Nightmare on Elm Street series built tension by having its characters fight to stay awake, “Black Phone 2” reverses that logic.

Gwen actively enters dreams to confront the Grabber, a choice that raises questions about why the situation could not have been resolved more easily.

Nevertheless, “Black Phone 2” stands as a compelling follow-up that aims higher than simple repetition. It expands the emotional and supernatural depth of the story while keeping the unsettling atmosphere from the original.

Though imperfect, it demonstrates that sequels can explore new psychological territory rather than chase the success of their original film. Derrickson’s careful direction and Hawke’s haunting performance make the sequel a must-watch.



PHOTO | THE NEW YORK TIMES

Gwen defeating the Grabber during the final fight scene in “Black Phone 2.”

K-pop’s hidden racism



PHOTO | MASHABLE.COM

Different K-pop stars from record labels such as HYBE, STARSHIP Entertainment and CUBE Entertainment.

By Solé Scott
Editor-in-Chief

Korean pop has stolen their music and creativity from Black artists all over the world for decades, and it is time we reveal the truth.

K-pop originated from South Korea and emerged in the 1990s.

My issue with this genre is that the artists and bosses of these big labels keep appropriating Black culture by wearing braids, grillz, durags, door knocker earrings, sagging pants, etc.

They are applauded for their fashion sense, while Black people are deemed ghetto or troublesome even though they are the originators of the styles.

Just a few weeks ago, I saw on X that Yseult, a Black French artist who sang at the 2024 Summer Olympics, was a recent victim of stolen intellectual property.

Her music video was copy and pasted by R.Tee and SOYEON for their own video for “DAMDADI.” A majority of the scenes were a recreation of Yseult’s music video for “BITCH YOU COULD NEVER.”

“The K-pop industry, like others, has sucked on Black culture like a vampire for decades. It samples our music, steals our movements, wears our skin like costumes and profits from our pain while erasing our names,” Yseult said.

The director of the copycat music video, Hong Minho, issued an apology and confessed to his crime.

“It’s true that I was inspired by Yseult’s work and her directing style. I have always deeply respected her and the directors she has collaborated with, and this admiration naturally influenced several visual ideas during this project,” Minho said.

Not all, but some K-pop artists have been caught in scandals. BLACKPINK came under fire for a resurfaced video of Jennie, racial slur as they rapped or sang a song leaked by their label YG Entertainment.

Blackface has been common in Korean media even today. For example, girl group MAMAMOO dressed up like Bruno Mars and his crew in Blackface during a concert in 2017.

J.Y. Park, who founded the YG Entertainment label, would perform with dancers imitating African Americans with Blackface, afros and style. During the show ‘Sister’s Slam Dunk,’ Park told a Korean singer that she sounded like Mary J. Blige, and that Blige was a thug.

Black K-pop idols are rare, and the ones that have made it expressed their hardships and mistreatments.

Alex Reid is a Texas-born woman who debuted in 2015 with the group BP Rania, which she departed in 2017.

“Being a Black woman in a K-pop group was hard,” Reid said.

Reid was subjected to racism by industry peers and the public. She was scolded for wearing a traditional Korean hanbok for a photo shoot, which is such a double standard considering what K-pop was built off.

I really loathe the notion that the K-pop stars were not aware of the inherent racism of their actions and just “making a mistake” because if that was the case, these ongoing issues in the industry would not be happening at all.

Social media is always an uproar, and numerous articles from magazines and online blogs have called out the industry for its racism.

I am insulted that my culture is seen as a costume and is used for public consumption, but when major events like these take place aimed against us, it is all quiet in the K-pop world.

R&B legend Stephanie Mills once said a line in an interview about the state of music today.

Mills said, “They want our rhythm but not our blues.”

Warmth within budget

By Jay’Mi Vazquez
Managing Editor

Now that the colder months are approaching, finding the right jacket has once again become a priority. As prices continue to climb across major fashion brands, spending wisely can make a noticeable difference.

The good news is that stylish, durable outerwear does not have to drain your wallet. From well-known discount retailers to online fashion outlets and the sustainable world of thrifting, there are plenty of ways to stay warm without overspending.

Burlington remains one of the most dependable destinations for budget-friendly outerwear.

The retailer continues to stand out by offering brand-name jackets and coats at heavily reduced prices.

Its wide selection includes everything from sleek wool coats and puffers to parkas and faux-fur styles, often marked down 50–70% from regular retail. Shoppers frequently come across labels like Calvin Klein, Tommy Hilfiger and Michael Kors.

What sets Burlington apart is its consistency, making it a trustworthy stop for quality jackets at a lower price.

Online fashion retailers have also become key players in the affordable outerwear market.

For instance, boohooMAN, which typically caters to younger, trend-focused shoppers, often runs major seasonal promotions, sometimes offering up to 60% off coats, bombers and trench jackets.

Surprisingly, boohooMAN’s designs are bold and modern, reflecting the pulse of current streetwear trends. While material quality can vary, the brand succeeds in offering on-trend outerwear that feels fresh without being costly.

For those after statement pieces like oversized puffers, varsity jackets or tailored long coats, boohooMAN is a strong online option.

Thrifting, meanwhile, remains a cornerstone of sustainable and budget-conscious fashion.

Local thrift stores and vintage shops often hide treasures such as well-made leather jackets, tailored wool coats and designer labels that have stood the test of time.

The appeal of thrifting goes beyond savings. Thrifting offers access to unique, one-of-a-kind pieces unavailable in big-box stores.

Online resale platforms such as Depop, ThredUp and Poshmark have brought this experience into the digital age, making secondhand fashion more accessible than ever.

For shoppers who prefer new items but still want deep discounts, off-price retailers like Marshalls, T.J. Maxx and Ross Dress for Less offer the perfect middle ground.

These stores specialize in overstock and past-season designs from major brands, meaning premium quality items at significant markdowns. Their constantly rotating inventory turns shopping into something of a treasure hunt.

The thrill of discovery, combined with genuine savings, make these stores a reliable option for finding brand name outerwear without the brand name price tag.

SOUTHERN NEWS

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