

Carrey and Carell reunite to make movie magic, literally and figuratively

Written by Kam Williams



Back in 2003, Jim Carrey was upstaged as the title character of "Bruce Almighty" by a scene-stealing Steve Carell as motor-mouthed, TV newscaster Evan Baxter. Consequently, Carrey wasn't even around for the sequel, Evan Almighty, a spinoff which completely revolved around Carell's expanded role.

Well, turnabout is fair play, and a decade later we find his titular performance overshadowed here by an inspired one on the part of a rejuvenated Carrey. Regardless, of far more import than which one's funnier is the fact that the two have reunited and they're better than ever as magicians competing to outdo each other in an escalating game of one-upmanship.

Directed by Don Scardino (NBC-TV's 30 Rock), "The Incredible Burt Wonderstone" also features a stellar supporting cast comprised of Alan Arkin, Steve Buscemi, Olivia Wilde, James Gandolfini, Brad Garrett and Jay Mohr, as well as the legendary David Copperfield, CNN's Erin Burnett and MSNBC's Richard Wolffe in amusing cameo appearances.

The picture's engaging premise is fairly easy to follow. Burt Wonderstone (Carell) and Anton Marvelton (Buscemi) have been doing magic tricks together since childhood, when they first teamed up to entertain their classmates. After thirty years, they're raking in millions at Bally's in

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Las Vegas where they share top billing on the marquee as "Burt & Anton: A Magical Friendship."

Truth be told, they've come to despise each other, primarily because of Burt's massive ego. As a result, the pair's act has grown stale, giving street performer Steve Gray (Carrey) a chance to steal a little of their thunder via bizarre stunts like not blinking and not urinating for days on end.

When the newcomer captures the public's imagination, attendance at Burt and Anton's shows declines, and it's not long before they feel the pressure to match Gray in outrageousness. But after Anton breaks his ankles and some ribs during their first dangerous stunt, Burt is forced to go mano-a-mano against Gray solo.

More than magic, the ensuing illusion competition contrasts Carrey's over-the-top antics with Carell's relatively-droll, tongue-in-cheek sense of humor, with the former's sight gags bowling me over way more than the latter's dry wit. A battle of competing comedy styles won hands-down by the rambunctious, rubber-faced run-a-muck!

Excellent (3.5 stars)

Rated PG-13 for profanity, sexuality, dangerous stunts and a drug-related incident.

Running time: 100 minutes

Distributor: Warner Brothers

To see a trailer for "The Incredible Burt Wonderstone", visit: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11TzXCWnUao>