

MOVIE REVIEW

BIRDMAN

Birdman or (*The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance*) opens with a rather baffling scene - a man levitating in a Buddha-esque position (in his tighty whities), while an apparently disembodied voice expresses disgust with the quality of life it's been subject to. As the camera zooms in, I only have one question - what is this leading to? I'm left pondering this as the camera shifts focus, giving me a view of the man's dismal dressing room before following him down a dimly lit, cramped corridor. Intrigued? I surely was. *Birdman* is an intense, fast paced dramedy of a washed up Hollywood actor trying to resurrect his glory days.

The story follows Riggan Thomson (Michael Keaton), a Hollywood has-been, famous for playing the character of a superhero, Birdman, two decades earlier. Since then, his career (and his personal life) has hit rock-bottom. In an attempt to regain his former status, he decides to write, direct and star in a Broadway adaptation of Raymond Carver's short story "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love." Riggan occasionally exhibits powers of telekinesis and levitation, especially during moments of intense emotional turmoil. While Riggan struggles to revive his image, the voice of Birdman haunts him, scornful of his endeavours. The play is produced by his best friend/attorney, Jake (Zach Galifianakis). Riggan is assisted by his daughter, Samantha (Emma Stone), a recovering drug addict. The cast of the play itself includes

Riggan's girlfriend Laura (Andrea Riseborough), Broadway newcomer Lesley (Naomi Watts), and the sly, erratic method actor Mike Shiner (Edward Norton). Essentially, this movie was director Alejandro González Iñárritu's attempt to tell the story of flawed individuals

struggling to find their way. Although *Birdman* may not be one's stereotypical idea of an 'exciting' movie, Iñárritu's scintillating storytelling and cinematographer Emmanuel Lubezki's ingenious camerawork make for eccentric viewing. The entire movie gives the audience the impression that it was filmed in one continuous, smooth take. We can see other examples of Lubezki's sheer brilliance in movies such as *Gravity* and *The Tree of Life*. Michael Keaton was phenomenal but the real showstopper was Edward Norton, whose peculiar antics and hilarious dialogues sent me into fits of laughter every time. Certain female characters, such as Laura and Lesley, were slightly underdeveloped and didn't make an impact to the plot. However, there are instances of sudden, startling character developments - rare moments when certain characters demand our attention. The scene where Samantha tells Riggan that he is irrelevant and 'non-existent' gives us an insight into her inner struggles and neglected childhood. The subtle shade to these characters makes this movie both intellectually and emotionally stimulating. The background percussion score by drummer Antonio Sanchez adds to the movie's dramatic flair.

Overall, *Birdman* isn't a movie that will appeal to an average audience. However, if you've got a taste for something bizarre and unorthodox, it's a must-see.



TV SERIES REVIEW

ARMAN R. KHAN

When some of my most favourite sitcoms went off the air, a friend suggested I watch "Undateable". And after I watched the first episode of the first season, I was hooked. A multi-camera sitcom made by Adam Sztykiel, this summer filler at NBC actually is more hilarious than many of its counterparts. The show is loosely based on a book of the same name by Ellen Rakieten and Anne Coyle.

Danny Burton (Chris D'Elia), a 30 year old single man living in Detroit, Michigan, finds a new roommate, after his old roomy gets married and moves out. This new guy is Justin Kearney (Brent Morin). He and Danny instantly click, even though they are different people altogether; while Danny is a carefree man living his life to the fullest with no intentions of settling down, Justin, a bar owner, is just the polar opposite. They, alongside their friends Brett

(David Fynn), Burski (Rick Glassman), Shelly (Ron Funches) and Danny's sister Leslie (Bianca Kajlich), comprise of the main cast. It is their day-to-day activities and uncalled for situations that form the plot of the humorous show.

All of the friends possess individual qualities that make them either unattractive, or unworthy of a proper romantic relationship. Ergo 'undateable'. The show mostly takes place in Danny and Justin's home or at the latter's Black Eyes Bar. Besides, Danny and Justin are bound to disagree on something or the other in every episode, and most of the funny dialogues come from there. Shelly is my favourite character, whose perfectly timed punch lines and generally adorable personality is loved by his friends.

Now here's my take. I like the show, really. It's "LOL" funny, has great character combinations with more or less likeable episodes. But I still cannot get over the fact that some of the characters closely resemble roles from other sitcoms we've seen throughout the years. For example, Danny, a stubborn ladies' man who doesn't want to grow up, reminds me of Charlie Harper (*Two and A Half Men*) and Barney Stinson (*HIMYM*), and Justin, sensitive and seemingly mature, possesses Ted Mosby (*HIMYM*) and Ross Geller's (*Friends*) attributes. Sometimes there are way too many punch lines in quick succession, and can get a little tedious. Otherwise, I have no complaints. The show really does make me laugh.

The first season has 13 episodes with 22 minutes runtime each. The second season of *Undateable* is in progress, so you really haven't missed much. I'd say go for this show if your weekend is free and if you're up for some light-hearted laughs.