

Blu-Ray Review: Corny 'Charlie St. Cloud' Inspires Derisive Guffaws

Submitted by [mattmoviemann](#) [1] on November 9, 2010 - 8:26am

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CHICAGO – “He’s totally cute...like James Dean,” sighs a swooning cashier as tween heartthrob Zac Efron enters her shop. Efron may be many things, but Dean he is not. This line has been wisely axed from the final cut of “Charlie St. Cloud,” after inspiring a great deal of derisive laughter during the trailer’s theatrical run.

That trailer may have garnered more laughter-per-theater than most of the year’s comedies combined. One reacts to such a travesty with a mixture of amusement, disgust and dizzying disbelief. How could a major studio possibly greenlight a project so cloying and self-parodying? By condensing the film’s plot to under three minutes, the trailer only highlighted the film’s inherent phoniness. Yet the actual film, which runs just under an hour and forty minutes, is more melancholy than morbidly entertaining, since it fails to explore the potential of an actor who is eager to evolve.



Blu-Ray Rating: **1.5/5.0**

Though Efron has displayed promise before, most notably in Richard Linklater’s “Me and Orson Welles,” he unfortunately re-teamed with his “17 Again” director Burr Steers for the film that would supposedly launch him as a dramatic leading man. Consider this launch aborted. “St. Cloud” is a horrendously dopey picture, down to its very title. Efron plays a hunky straight-arrow teen with formidable sailing skills and a scholarship to Stanford. Clearly, he’s screwed. Immediately after graduating from high school, Efron’s bratty little brother (Charlie Tahan) dies in a brutal car crash. But that doesn’t stop Efron from teaching him how to pitch a baseball. That’s right, folks. This is one of those countless mortality-bending dramas where the living freely interacts with the dead, thanks to a sentimental psychic contrivance. Efron encounters his ghostly brother and promises that they’ll play catch every day. He ends up keeping his promise...for five years. No wonder why the town thinks he’s a nut. The film pretends to offer two solutions: either Efron has psychic powers or he’s off his rocker. But it’s alarmingly obvious that no film this aggressively cute is going to end with Efron confined to a mental ward.



Zac Efron regrettably stars in Burr Steers’s Charlie St. Cloud.

Photo credit: Universal Home Entertainment

“St. Cloud” is such a bad afterlife drama that it could potentially convert a large portion of its audience to Atheism. There are several twists in the plot, all of them easily guessable, yet Steers treats the source material (Ben Sherwood’s novel, “The Death and Life of Charlie St. Cloud”) as if it were “The Usual Suspects.” Every time a new twist is revealed, the film cuts to a breathless montage of past images from the film designed to blow your mind. Sadly, they don’t lead to the epiphany that Efron is indeed Keyser Söze.

It must be said that Efron is not the primary problem here. His performance is not a complete embarrassment, and he’s certainly more watchable than Miley Cyrus in the equally execrable soap opera “The Last Song.” But his presence is utterly devoid of the magnetism necessary to carry a feature length film. When he’s required to look grief-stricken, his expression merely becomes downcast and sullen. His face attempts to justify the inexplicable stream of tears trickling out of his eyes, but it all amounts to a lot of mannered brooding. He’s simply not convincing.



Charlie St. Cloud was released on Blu-Ray and DVD on Nov. 9, 2010.

Photo credit: Universal Home Entertainment

Without the lighthearted charm that made him a crowd-pleaser in the first place, Efron just comes off as dull. He’s quickly upstaged by the lively ensemble, which includes Amanda Crew (as the love interest with the priceless line, “He flummoxed me!”) and Augustus Prew (as the wasted British comic relief). All of these actors deserve a far better vehicle for their abilities. The film is too inappropriate for young kids and too childish for young adults. It will only satisfy those members of Team Jacob who rent a movie solely for the purpose of watching a hot shirtless dude in HD.

“Charlie St. Cloud” is presented in 1080p High Definition (with a 2.40:1 aspect ratio), accompanied by English, French, Spanish and Descriptive Video Service audio tracks, and includes the usual BD-Live Universal features, such as pocket BLU and social BLU apps. Viewers dying to see “Lorenzo’s Oil” or “What Dreams May Come” are in luck, since both films are available for free instant streaming, courtesy of an odd new Universal feature, furthering the connection of television and the Internet. The instantly forgettable extras include two puff pieces about Efron’s irresistible good looks and blindingly bright future. Co-stars Ray Liotta and Kim Basinger freely admit that they did the film because their kids would’ve killed them if they didn’t.

Efron’s “High School Musical” habits were still thriving onset, inspiring him to continuously monitor his “choreography” during playbacks. There’s also a laughable featurette titled “In Between Worlds,” which treats the film’s plot as if it was a serious and nuanced account of paranormal phenomena (parapsychologist Loyd Auerbach appears to have bought it hook, line and stinker).

Rounding out the disc is a snoozer of a commentary by Steers, who reveals that the film’s location was changed from Massachusetts to Vancouver, thus explaining why his characters seem to have a mysterious fixation on the Boston Red Sox. He refers to the color red as the film’s “dead color” (a shameless rip-off of “The Sixth Sense”), and has the audacity to cite Carrol Ballard’s “Wind” and Nicolas Roeg’s “Don’t Look Now” as inspirations. Give me a break. Steers also provides optional commentary over ten minutes of deleted scenes which include moments of actual character development, allowing the cast (particularly Prew and Basinger) to flex their acting muscles. Like so many

Hollywood hacks, Steers admits that he had to cut the character-based scenes in order to move the plot along. And since the plot is nothing but a hokey mess, Steers has succeeded in making a human drama entirely devoid of human interest, and a spiritual fantasy that is utterly soulless.

'Charlie St. Cloud' is released by Universal Home Entertainment and stars Zac Efron, Amanda Crew, Charlie Tahan, Augustus Prew, Donal Logue, Kim Basinger and Ray Liotta. It was written by Craig Pearce and Lewis Colick and directed by Burr Steers. It was released on Nov. 9th, 2010. It is rated PG-13.



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