

## Film Review: Story Dims Visionary ‘Oz the Great and Powerful’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on March 8, 2013 - 9:40am

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CHICAGO – “Oz the Great and Powerful” is a great and powerful visual and 3D experience. It expands the landscape of what cinema can produce in a visceral and evolutionary way. But a great film also needs a great story, and this Land of Oz tale is not equivalent to the awe-inspiring imagery.



There is no Dorothy, Scarecrow, Tin Man or Cowardly Lion in this Oz movie, it is inspired by a deeper exploration of the series of books by original author L. Frank Baum, but it’s also a wholly new storyline. It is essentially the origin of the Wonderful Wizard of Oz, taking place before Dorothy touched down, and begins with a clever tribute to the 1939 classic. Where it gets a bit sticky is in the interaction of the Wizard –portrayed by a distracted and miscast James Franco – with a talking monkey, the witches and other weird occupants of Oz. The story diminishes the excitement of the magnificent landscape, by unfolding too slowly and unsubstantially. By the time the more enthralling last act comes around, there has been too much journeying, and not enough destination, on the yellow brick road.

Oscar “Oz” Diggs (James Franco) is a small scale magician on the state fair circuit in 1905 Kansas. He is somewhat of a con artist and ladies man, generating indifference from both his audience and fellow performers. After trying to entice one too many lovelies, he is pursued by a circus strong man and forced to flee in a hot air balloon. A familiar Kansas tornado comes along, and sweeps the magic man to the Land of Oz.

He is greeted by Theodora (Mila Kunis), a seductive force who turns out later to be a well-known directional witch. Oz himself is thought to be a wizard, part of a prophecy designed to make him king of the realm. This involves Theodora’s sister, Evanora (Rachel Weisz), who has her own designs for the Emerald City and the Oz kingdom. To counteract all this intrigue, it will take the Wizard, his flying monkey companion Finley (voice of Zach Braff), an odd China Doll (Joey King), a good witch named Glinda (Michelle Williams) and the citizens of Oz – including the Munchkins – to save the day.

*“Oz the Great and Powerful” opens everywhere on March 8th. See local listings for 3D theaters and showtimes. Featuring James Franco, Michelle Williams, Mila Kunis, Zach Braff and Rachel Weisz. Screenplay by Michael Kapner and David Lindsay-Abaire. Directed by Sam Raimi. Rated “PG”*

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Off to See: Mila Kunis as Theodora and James Franco as ‘Oz the Great and Powerful’  
*Photo credit: Walt Disney Pictures*



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