

Blu-ray Review: 'Cirque du Soleil: Worlds Away' Renders Spectacle Incoherent

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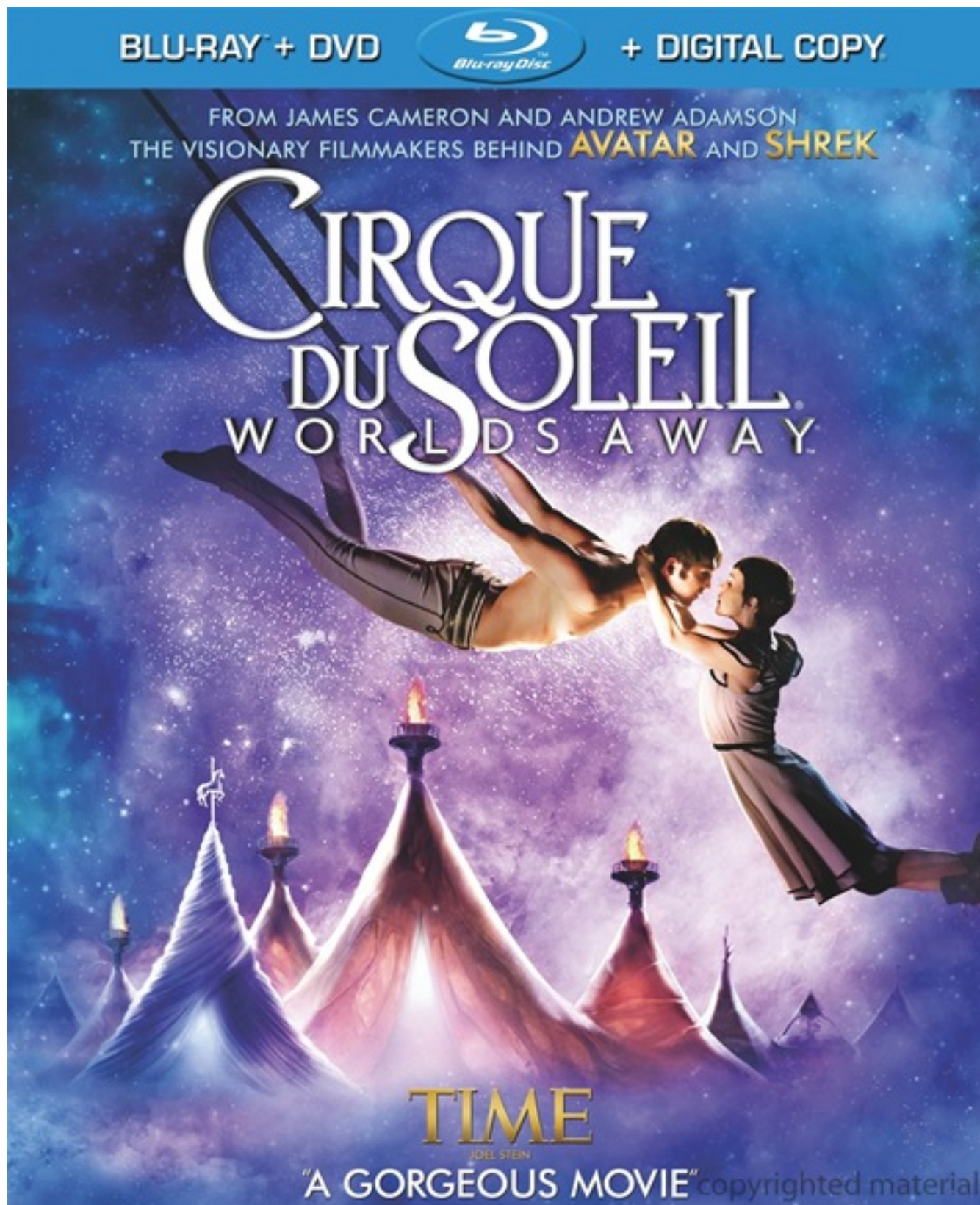
CHICAGO – Contrary to what James Cameron may have you believe, a 3D movie theater is not the best venue to showcase the super-human physical feats of Cirque du Soleil. In fact, it's a pretty awful substitute for the visceral thrill of a live performance. The audience experiences it like an English-speaking agnostic attending a Latin mass—there's plenty of loud pageantry on display, but none of it makes any sense.

That's because Andrew Adamson's big-screen novelty, "Cirque du Soleil: Worlds Away," is a tonally disjointed highlight reel that stitches together a greatest hits catalogue of Cirque acts while presenting them with zero context. Attempting to describe any given moment of this picture would be as hopeless an effort as Matt Lauer's bewildered commentary during Danny Boyle's Opening Ceremony at last year's Olympics. I could tell you that a hobo clown is lit on fire or that an empty pair of galoshes rides a tricycle, but I can't tell you why or more importantly, why you should care.



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

It doesn't matter how beautiful the lighting and set design are or how extraordinarily gravity-defying the stunts are if the frenzied editing fails to bring them a shred of coherence. The montages are so choppily edited that the audience has to keep reorienting themselves to the action to the point of dizziness. The stage really is the ideal venue to witness these acts because it allows viewers to drink in multiple details at once. Everything in Adamson's film is framed too close and too in-your-face. It's like a drug movie without the buzz. At a distance, the grotesque costumes and makeup adorning the Cirque performers may look delightfully surreal, but when viewed through a fish-eye lens, they are deeply creepy, guaranteeing several months' worth of nightmares for young viewers. When the heroine finally shouts her only line of dialogue, "HELP!", she's articulating the dominant thought on every sober and still conscious moviegoer's mind (most everyone else will have drifted off by then).



Cirque du Soleil: Worlds Away was released on Blu-ray and DVD on March 12th, 2013.

Photo credit: Paramount Home Media Distribution

And yes, in this plotless 90-minute advertisement for every Cirque spectacle on planet Earth, there is indeed a heroine, played by Erica Linz, who wears the exact same expression of blank indifference on her face throughout the entire picture. Every time the camera wasted screen time by cutting to her dismal mug, I wanted to shout out in protest. Only at the very end does Linz—and the picture—come to life as she's paired with her assigned Prince Charming, an aerialist (Igor Zaripov) who sweeps her up into a genuinely enchanting dance routine where their feet barely ever touch the floor. Apart from that one lovely scene, the film is a scattershot barrage of experimental mischief occasionally scored to trippy Beatles tunes like "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds," "Octopus's Garden" and inevitably, "Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite," which somehow manages to be even more unpleasant than Julie Taymor's version in "Across the Universe." I suppose I should be grateful that "Revolution 9" got left out.

"Cirque du Soleil: Worlds Away" is presented in 1080p High Definition (with a 1.85:1 aspect ratio), accompanied by English, French, Spanish and Portuguese audio tracks, and is available in a Blu-ray 3D/Blu-ray/DVD/digital copy/UltraViolet combo pack. As for the extras, miniscule would be too kind a word. There's a making-of featurette that barely crosses the 2-minute mark, as well as an ad for the Las Vegas Cirque show, which basically serves the same function as the film, but has the benefit of being ninety times shorter. The one decent extra, clocking in around 13 minutes, provides a glimpse backstage at the tight-knit performers' rehearsal rituals, allowing Linz to demonstrate that she has an infectiously likable personality—yet another detail lost in this botched adaptation from Cirque to screen.

'Cirque du Soleil: Worlds Away' is released by Paramount Home Media Distribution and stars Erica Linz and Igor Zaripov. It was written and directed by Andrew Adamson. It was released on March 12th, 2013. It is rated PG.



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