

Film Review: Michael Keaton Soars in Mesmerizing ‘Birdman’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on October 23, 2014 - 6:01pm

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CHICAGO – There are parts of “Birdman” that are absolutely breathtaking, in dialogue, performance and visual acumen. Even its subtitle, “The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance” has a wonderful payoff. Michael Keaton provides an Oscar worthy performance as the title character.



Rating: **4.5/5.0**

The film is cut as if it were one long take, with cinematic coolness from director Alejandro González Iñárritu (“Babel”). If you’ve heard about the film, with Michael Keaton portraying a character that once starred in a huge superhero franchise, then you may think it’s autobiographical – substitute Batman for Birdman. But this is a fully realized and complex character that is mostly unlike the real life and affable Keaton. The performance is up close and personal, it goes places that are both dark and light, it mingles with the energy of the supporting cast with vivid and glorious insight. This is the Michael Keaton that proves he can carry a motion picture and bring it to substantial virtue, and it’s a wonderful ride that is awe-evoking from beginning to end.

Riggan (Keaton) is a has-been movie star who had his day back in the 1990s, when he portrayed franchise superhero Birdman. The actor is rolling the dice on Broadway, writing, performing and directing a stage play based on the writings of author Raymond Carver. His daughter Sam (Emma Stone), fresh from rehab, acts as his assistant and confidante.

His fellow performers in the play are giving him fits, especially the mercurial Mike (Edward Norton), who used to be the lover of co-star Lesley (Naomi Watts). His lawyer/agent Jake (Zach Galifianakis) is convinced the show won’t work, and the haughty New York Times critic (Lindsay Duncan) is looking to bury the play. It might take his alter ego Birdman to save Riggan’s crumbling life.

“Birdman or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)” continues its limited release in Chicago on October 24th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Michael Keaton, Emma Stone, Zach Galifianakis, Edward Norton, Lindsay Duncan and Naomi Watts. Screenplay by Alejandro González Iñárritu, Nicolás Giacobone, Alexander Dinelaris and Armando Bo. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Rated “R”



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Riggan (Michael Keaton) and Friend in 'Birdman'
Photo credit: Fox Searchlight Pictures

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