

Gondry’s Cinematic Breakthrough ‘Be Kind Rewind’ Proves Again He’s an Artistic Goliath

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CHICAGO – Michel Gondry’s latest cinematic breakthrough “Be Kind Rewind” grants passage into his magical imagination and proves yet again he’s one of today’s artistic giants.

Whimsicality, childlike humor and unforgettable imagery line the palette of this film, which is a heartfelt yet hilarious tale of two friends saving a VHS rental shop (itself named Be Kind Rewind) from technology by instigating a passion for film in their neighborhood.



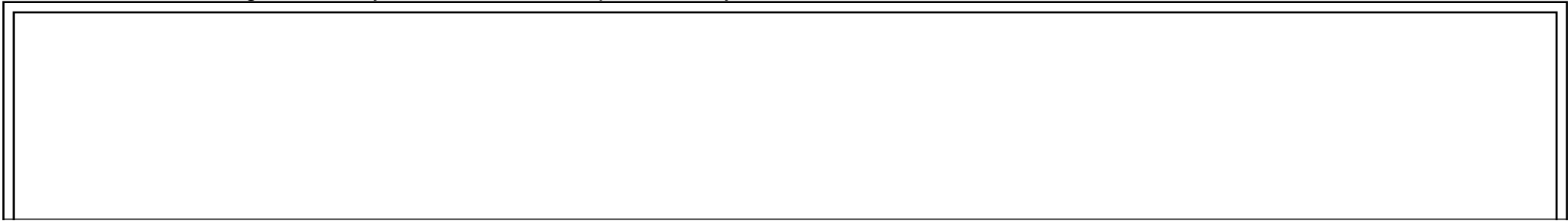
Set in tired Passaic, N.J., the shop is located in a building that’s rumored to be the birthplace of jazz icon Fats Waller. It’s owned by Mr. Fletcher (Danny Glover), who is faced with the inevitable gentrification of condominiums and DVD rental stores.

Trying to earn his praise, Mike (Mos Def) works and lives at the shop and respects Mr. Fletcher as a father. Mike is visited daily if not hourly by mechanic pal Jerry (Jack Black), who lives in a trailer on the junkyard next to the power plant across the street.

When Mr. Fletcher goes out of town, he asks Miss Falewicz (Mia Farrow) to check on Mike, whom he has left in charge of the store with strict orders to “keep Jerry out”. That’s when Gondry’s wild imagination ignites and the mischievous eccentricities begin.

Things go amiss when Jerry’s quirky paranoia feeds the idea that the government is controlling (“paranizing”) his brain through the power plant. When wearing foil and metal colanders on his head are no longer enough protection, he decides to sabotage the plant and ends up magnetized by an enormous surge of power.

Next, Jerry accidentally demagnetizes all the tapes and causes the duo to have to shoot “Ghostbusters” in four hours, which is earlier requested for rental by the scrutinizing Miss Falewicz. “Ghostbusters” is just the beginning of the hysterical filmmaking, which is followed by “Rush Hour 2,” “Driving Miss Daisy,” “Carrie,” “Robocop” and many more.





Jack Black (left) and Mos Def in "Be Kind Rewind".
Photo credit: IMDb

Their technique of "Sweding" films becomes immensely popular in the neighborhood and their inflated rental pricing gives them hope of saving Mr. Fletcher's shop.

By bringing the neighborhood together through their imaginative filmmaking techniques, they create a film about legendary native Fats Waller to make a final attempt at saving Be Kind Rewind and wrap our hearts around the story in the process.

Gondry harnesses Black's often-unruly screen energy and creates a feeling of playful yet controlled improvisation between the two main stars. Black brings his usual display of lyrical antics to Jerry and carries the majority of laughs throughout the film.

His outlandish idiosyncrasies mesh with the even-more-improbable storyline and Mike compliments Jerry through his levelheaded and patient tendencies. Performances by Mia Farrow, Danny Glover and Sigourney Weaver bring balance to the overly energetic filmmakers and frame the story with a traditional start-to-finish plotline.



Jack Black (left) and Melonie Diaz in "Be Kind Rewind".
Photo credit: IMDb

This makes it much more commercial than Gondry's "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" and "The Science of Sleep". Creative props dress every scene of the Sweded films and childhood flashbacks of playing dress-up and acting out skits of your favorite movies are nearly impossible to evade.

Instead of animating inanimate objects ("The Science of Sleep") or looking through the eyes of a toddler ("Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind"), Gondry – a master of projecting the inner child – chooses this time to animate his characters through youthful and inventive creativity.

This Gondrian feature makes for a very colorful visual and emotional experience. A passion and appreciation of movies and moviemaking give this film a thematic backbone reminiscent of Federico Fellini's "8½" and Giuseppe Tornatore's "Nuovo Cinema Paradiso". Its animated set design and comedic stars, however, allow it to have a more fantastical quality.

While the hilarious film references and guerilla filmmaking tactics are impressive to movie buffs, they could easily be lost to the tenderfoot. Gondry's unique style can be an acquired taste to some, but for those who have cultivated their imaginations since childhood, this is an ingenious must see.

"Be Kind Rewind" opened on Feb. 22, 2008.

[Click here for our full "Be Kind Rewind" image gallery!](#) [13]

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