

Vince Vaughn, Owen Wilson Lack Brass in ‘The Internship’

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CHICAGO – Dang, dang, dang. C’mon, Vince Vaughn and Owen Wilson, how about a little anarchy? “The Internship” is a perfectly nice little comedy about old dudes trying to break into the new world of Google employment. But this new world is just another empire, and nobody wants to topple it.

The problem is that because the film uses the actual Google name, they couldn’t comment negatively on the product itself. The old school versus new, in a technology sense, would be ripe for a good old fashion take down, but instead it becomes a nice two hour commercial for the workplace of the search engine product. Apparently this is a utopia of the 9-5 grind, where a playground slide “awesomely” substitutes for a stairwell, and free food (yes, free food!) is the lifeblood of all that is holy, without any actual work being crushed, trapped in an airless cube. It seems that Google is big enough to take a bit more of a spanking, or couldn’t the screenwriters – which includes star Vince Vaughn – had made up their own search engine name (Gaggle?) and put in some old fashion butt kicking about the current tech society? This was a strange touchy-feely scenario created for the movie partnership of Vaughn and Wilson, who made their reputation by being the fly in the ointment, not the ointment itself.

Billy (Vince Vaughn) and Nick (Owen Wilson) are ace sales reps for a product – wristwatches, ha, ha – that no longer have a place in the modern market. They are summarily laid off from their jobs, and Billy’s house is put into foreclosure. After several days of Nick doing a wacky job (mattress store clerk), Billy suggests applying for an internship at the utopian main headquarters of Google. The company itself is “seeking diversity,” so with no tech qualifications at all, the forty-something duo are brought into the intern program.



Photo credit: 20th Century Fox Film Corporation

But there is a catch. They have to qualify for a job by completing a series of challenges by teaming up with other interns, and since Billy and Nick are two non-techies, they end up with the less-than-cool kids, who are actually cool, but for movie purposes are not cool. This leads to a classic (or ripped off) snob vs. slob face-off, and as every movie fan knows, the snobs don't have a chance. Oh yeah, and Nick hits on Dana (Rose Byrne), a Google executive.

First off, wouldn't the ultimate outsider nerds at a tech competition tend to be the best at that technology, thus turning the "slobs vs. snobs rule" on its ear? Even though the story has the requisite party scene, where the nerd outsiders have a few tequila shots and suddenly become the best party gang ever (as it has been since "Animal House" did it 35 years ago), wouldn't a smelly loner be valuable for their skills rather than the ogling of "PG-13" strippers? Yes. This film would have you think otherwise. And the nerd crew itself are the most beautiful examples of social outcasts ever assembled, with the lovely Marielena (Jessica Szohr) leading the way, having no visible outsider credentials in personality or appearance.

And what the heck has happened to Vaughn and Wilson? It's impossible not to compare the raucous con men from "Wedding Crashers" to these stripped down characters who don't take any advantage of their inevitable older generation potential in this film, and become superheroes to the tech generation. The smarmy Vaughn character has virtually been castrated here, reduced to being dressed down by a 22 year old British mean guy (Max Minghella). Owen Wilson gets it even worse, becoming a doey-eyed man child mooning over an exec who hates him, then loves him. There is no development or sense of the relationship – plus it breaks one of the Google cardinal rules about dating co-workers – and the rules only don't apply when Owen shakes that blonde mane, now noticeably thinner.

The script does none of the supporting characters any favors. The hate-them-than-love-them scenario is the major theme, and gets a bit annoying. The internship manager, Mr. Chetty, is portrayed by Aasif Mandvi, the very funny ex-correspondent on "The Daily Show." Because of the hate-them-love-them rule, he gets to be sour the the entire film, until...yep, the whole thing works like that. Rose Byrne, who completely ruled her rich woman character in "Bridesmaids," is reduced to wearing the tightest jeans ever on a corporate executive, and hate-them-etc.



Who Gave it the Greenlight?: Wilson and Vaughn in 'The Internship'
Photo credit: 20th Century Fox Film Corporation

It's hard not to remember when American movies would actually criticize institutions like government and corporations. It's implied in this film that Google is the most wonderful place on earth, with no going-postal personalities and with a big bus that anyone can use at any time. In fact, this is one of the greatest product placement recruiting pictures ever, with Vaughn and crew wearing sponsorship tee-shirts for a number of consumer goods. They should work for Pentagon propaganda. USA! USA!

There are some funny lines, a couple entertaining cameos and the Vaughn/Wilson team still has a bit in their tank. But there is something very awkward about taking a real corporation and making it the be all and end all. It's enough to drive anyone to use Bing.

"The Internship" opens everywhere on June 7th.. Featuring Vince Vaughn, Owen Wilson, Rose Byrne, Aasif Mandvi, Jessica Szohr, Max Minghella and Eric André. Screenplay by Vince Vaughn and Jared Stern. Directed by Shawn Levy. Rated "PG-13"



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