

British Import 'Alan Partridge' With Steve Coogan is Just Plain Silly

Submitted by [NickHC](#) [1] on April 26, 2014 - 4:41pm

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Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Before earning Oscar nom validation for his “Philomena” screenplay last year, British comedian Steve Coogan led a separate life as Alan Partridge, a dopey media personality who symbolized the danger of empowering clowns like him with a microphone, whether on a news program, a late night show, or in a radio booth. A daffy concoction co-created by Armando Iannucci (of HBO’s “Veep” and the satirical film “In the Loop”), the character has bopped around different BBC series for years, until now getting his first feature film. With Coogan given a rare opportunity to show his prowess stateside as a lead comedian (he has appeared in “The Other Guys,” “Tropic Thunder,” and “Our Idiot Brother” in side roles), this British comedy does have a special charm. But even a certified comedian can only take a spotty collection of bits so far.

The latest adventure for Partridge finds him in situation of a sensationalism that even he wouldn’t dream up. His current radio station has taken up new management, which is dangerous for the likes of non-shock jocks like Partridge and his friend Pat Farrell (Colm Meaney). When Pat is sacked (and unknowingly so by Alan’s selfish urging to save his own job), Pat takes the radio station hostage the night of a company party introducing its new, sexy changes (even the new jingle sounds like a shampoo commercial). Alan is standing outside of the station at this time, oblivious to what is going on. Pat treats this as a stand against a culture obsessed with youth and sexing up anything in means of appeal; though he walks around the station with a shotgun, he has great delight in talking about the old days on the radio, having given himself airwave carte blanche.

As the one who is closest to Pat and has the highest chance of communicating with him, Alan becomes a middleman by the police to assess and try to resolve. Given this importance to the crime scene, Alan also stands as a tool for media coverage, figuring out how he can enhance his own brand from this experience, nonetheless at the expense of everyone else’s safety.



Steve Coogan as the title character in 'Alan Partridge'

Photo credit: Magnolia Pictures

American audiences will relate to Alan Partridge as a British Ron Burgundy, a media man whose narcissism is the top story, and whose selfishness toys with fatal consequences. For those who are used to taking him in side-character doses, Coogan shows here the same dedication to character that makes Will Ferrell so popular, with a focus on articulating the specific personality traits that show why perspective doesn't immediately come with age. Framed as a losing underdog who thinks he is a winner, Partridge is endearing as much as he is a fop, his self-obsession creating a strange sense of sympathy as he creates his own problems for himself.

Coogan finds his appropriate John C. Reilly-esque teddy bear in Meaney, who provides an integral performance. He has both a tone-defining darkness that doesn't lose seriousness within a hostage situation, and the similar delusion to keep the comedy in dark comedy. His own depression and aggressiveness is the violent type of cartoonish, but like a Looney Tune, without the worry that graphic violence will actually be in place.

Its script sometimes focused on reverting against formalities (such as awkwardly picking up a forgotten glove after dramatically leaving the room), there are some solid laughs to be erupted, all due to humor that seems distinct. "Alan Partridge" even opens with a delightfully random reference to "Koyaanisqatsi," providing a promising indication and slight foreshadowing of the nuttiness that the movie will cover.



Steve Coogan & Colm Meaney in ‘Alan Partridge’
Photo credit: Magnolia Pictures

But as seasoned as Coogan’s embodiment of this definitively goofy bastard may be, the film’s jokes repeat his characteristics of dangerous narcissism to a point where even newcomers will recognize all shenanigans as just Partridge bein’ Partridge. The film has little problem generalizing its purpose, dreaming unusually smaller than TV adaptations that hope to expand upon the scope of their initial properties. Bit quantity is of the highest priority, immediately indicating what type of TV adaptation this really is. It works for giving the talented Coogan some goofy opportunities, but it can make the whole package less zippy than its abundant silliness may promise. As indicated in an opening credit sequence that just has him singing in the car alone (a la Richard Linklater’s “Bernie”), the movie bestows Coogan plenty of space, even if the script’s comedy isn’t itself loaded wall-to-wall.

Even when working with material that is not, Coogan is an inspired performer in a sometimes underwhelming gig. His feature film character moment is efficiently light but also imperfect. At about the time that he loses his trousers, the film confirms that it is a bunch of plain silliness, in a sense that is plain most of all.

“Alan Partridge” opened in Chicago on April 25th. Featuring Steve Coogan, Colm Meaney, Tim Key, Karl Theobald, and Felicity Montagu. Written by Peter Baynham, Steve Coogan, Neil Gibbons, Rob Gibbons, and Armando Iannucci. Directed by Declan Lowney. Rated “R”



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