

Waste of Talent, Sequel Energy in ‘Now You See Me 2’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on June 12, 2016 - 7:34am

- [Daniel Radcliffe](#) [2]
- [Dave Franco](#) [3]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [4]
- [Jesse Eisenberg](#) [5]
- [Lizzy Caplan](#) [6]
- [Magicians](#) [7]
- [Mark Ruffalo](#) [8]
- [Michael Caine](#) [9]
- [Morgan Freeman](#) [10]
- [Movie Review](#) [11]
- [Now You See Me 2](#) [12]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [13]
- [Summit Entertainment](#) [14]
- [Woody Harrelson](#) [15]



Rating: **1.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – Separately, you love all these movie star icons and funny people – Daniel Radcliffe, Michael Caine, Mark Ruffalo, Jesse Eisenberg, Woody Harrelson, Morgan Freeman, Lizzy Caplan and Dave Franco. Together, they add up to a terrible sequel, “Now You See Me 2.”

There was no need to make the sequel “Now You See Me 2,” and the filmmakers and lead actors went out and proved it. As a boilerplate, the plot is exactly the same from the first film – a band of rogue magicians (yes, magicians) called The Four Horseman are not only David Copperfield-like entertainers, they are superheroes saving the earth (for some reason). In this outing, they are set up as some kind of anti-heroes, but they are so “above it all” that the outcome for them is exactly predictable. If a screenplays sets out to make its characters all god-like, then what chance does even Daniel “Harry Potter” Radcliffe and the great Michael Caine (portraying villains) have? My wish was for them to have a large sock with manure in it, to at least embarrass the arrogant Horseman. But they were content to be defeated (spoiler alert) with no manure in sight, except the film itself.

The Four Horsemen have fled underground after the events in the first film (as well they should have). They are both the magicians and their facilitators, including Danny (Jesse Eisenberg), Dylan (Mark Ruffalo), Jack (Dave Franco), Merritt (Woody Harrelson) and Thaddeus (Morgan Freeman). Female magic doer Henley has flown the coop, so daffy Lula (Lizzy Caplan) joins the gang.



House of Cards: Mark Ruffalo, Dave Franco, Jesse Eisenberg and Lizzy Caplan in ‘Now You See Me 2’

Photo credit: Summit Entertainment

It seems that an evil tech billionaire named Walter (Daniel Radcliffe) is trying to lure the Horsemen back to the surface, and actually kidnaps them with the help of Merritt's twin brother Chase (Harrelson, again). Behind all this nefarious activity is Arthur Tressler (Michael Caine), the antagonist from the first film. From China to London the Horsemen ride, until what's up their sleeve is revealed.

We all love the lead actors, we really do. And because they score high in all this love, the screenplay doesn't lay a finger on them – and that is the problem. These aren't real people or even real magicians – 90% of the illusions are digitally manipulations – and this adventure doesn't want to ground them, or give them conflict. It is all our fault. The level of our love is so high, that I thought The Beatles (even the two dead ones) were going to reunite – just for the magical gang – to sing “All You Need is Love (For the Horsemen).”

So with nothing to stop the love the film devolves into ultra predictable fare. There is absolutely no question that these amazing beloved prestidigitators will win in the end, so what is the point exactly? Why pay for Daniel “Harry Potter” Radcliffe to be a villain when you already have Michael Caine? Their villainy is on that level of even-we-love-the-Horsemen, and it wouldn't surprise me if they all come together in the next film and simply have no villains, only the magicians and their adoring fans, complimenting each other.

There are some classic jump-the-shark maneuvers in the story. There is a new character introduced named Chase, who is the twin brother of Woody Harrelson's Merritt, and (surprise) Harrelson plays both roles! Except Chase has a toupee and false teeth! The screenwriter – Ed Solomon, for the record – had to reach back to 1960s sitcoms to come up with that one. What is most annoying about Chase is the waffling about whether he is good or bad. Given his level of annoyance, it is a moot point, he probably best would be used for bait in the old shark tank trick.



Dave Franco, Lizzy Caplan, Woody Harrelson and Jesse Eisenberg in 'Now You See Me 2'

Photo credit: Summit Entertainment

The film's biggest sin is its waste of great talent. Mark Ruffalo, coming off of his Oscar nominated role in last year's “Spotlight,” does some serious paycheck cashing in the film, barely acting about a whisper to get through it. The rest of the Oscar nominated or Oscar winners – Michael Caine, Woody Harrelson, Morgan Freeman and Jesse Eisenberg – what is their motivation (money)? Michael Caine, especially it seems, will do anything to keep the dollars rolling. Did he have a bad investment in the 1960s, or maybe too many homes or alimonies?

I'm giving a pass to Dave Franco, [who I interviewed for this film](#) [16], because he's trying to get his footing and got this franchise. Lizzy “Masters of Sex” Caplan is just along for the ride (as the “female” magician), and the rest of the cast and crew got working vacations to China and London. But that means nothing to the audience, and nothing is what we got, up their sleeves or otherwise.

“Now You See Me 2” opens everywhere on June 10th. Featuring Dave Franco, Daniel Radcliffe, Michael Caine, Mark Ruffalo, Jesse Eisenberg, Woody Harrelson, Morgan Freeman and Lizzy Caplan. Screenplay by Ed Solomon. Directed by Jon M. Chu. Rated “PG-13”



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- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/now-you-see-me-2>
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