

Magic & Creativity is Formula for ‘Dave Made a Maze’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on August 18, 2017 - 9:56am

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Rating: **4.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – When the magnificently creative film “Dave Made a Maze” begins, it seems like another Millennial generation stab at micro budget filmmaking, with a claustrophobic set and extreme archetypes instead of characters. But then the “exploration” of the title maze starts, and suddenly “Dave” becomes a marvel of invention, tribute, hilarity and even truth.

A passionate group of filmmakers got together with a strange idea... what if they were to send this group of archetypes into a cardboard fort that a frustrated artist has built, a group that includes his offbeat lover? And what if once inside that maze, the magic begins, as rooms become expansive and tests the will of the search party, transporting them into fantasies of their favorite adventure films from the last 40 years. Oh yeah, and there has to be a film-within-a-film that a hapless documentary crew is trying to make. Does this sound like a movie you’d like to see? Well, it’s even better than what is imagined from that description.

Dave (Nick Thune) is an artist at the crossroads. He is lost in his own extreme angst, which includes his live-in relationship with Annie (Meera Rohit Kumbhani). While his galpal is on a business trip, he goes a bit mad and locks himself into the apartment, building a cardboard fort in the living room. When Annie comes home, she discovers that Dave is inside his creation, and cannot find his way out.



Baby, I'm A-Mazed: The Entrance to the Labyrinth in ‘Dave Made a Maze’

Photo credit: Gravitas Ventures

Annie begins to call in Dave's fellow travelers, including his wingman Gordon (Adam Busch), caustic Leonard (Scott Krinsky) and daffy Jane (Kirsten Vangsness). While the troops begin to gather, they start to call other people to witness this odd occurrence, including a documentary film crew (James Urbaniak as the director, Frank Caeti, Scott Narver) and other odd bystanders, including two Flemish tourists. They all crawl inside the fort to save the artist hero.

The film is the journey inside the cardboard fort, which from the outside looks like the haphazard gems of our childhoods (built usually from the box after the refrigerator is delivered). But inside, the fort takes on enormous proportions, in various rooms of overcoming doom. The group that is inside, searching for Dave, go on various adventures within the maze of the fort's inner sanctums. The innards are a combination tribute of 1970s through the '90s movie adventures (think "Goonies") and Dave's twisted artist mind. Did I mention the Minotaur (John Hennigan)?

As was mentioned above, the actors seemed like the type of performers that the director gathers as "friends" to make a movie, funded with 10 grand from Kickstarter. This deceptive element is part of the fun, and the characters stay within those parameters the whole way. Dave and Annie (Thune and Kumbhani) have an extraordinary scene as they flashback to points in their relationship – it's highly imaginative stuff from director Bill Watterson. The scene stealers include the documentary crew, with James Urbaniak's "director" simply stellar. Kirsten Vangsness, in a small-but-crazy-ass role, artfully chews some cardboard scenery as she conforms to the new maze world.



The 'Stanley Kubrick Room' in 'Dave Made a Maze'

Photo credit: Gravitas Ventures

And we have to talk about the "art of cardboard" in this film, it is taken to the ultra high levels. The production team designed a "Stanley Kubrick" room, that is a space straight out of "2001," there are cunning traps that are made completely from cardboard, and finally there is a magic talisman, that explodes into a cosmic and emotional piece of destiny. The film really has to be seen to be experienced, because every bit of passionate detail that could have been thought of was actualized, and made into cinema.

Of course the main metaphor doesn't hurt... aren't we all trapped in the maze called life? Dave took matters into his own heart, and found that artist again through the labyrinth of his own creative soul. Isn't that the way we can always escape, and isn't that how those "cardboard walls" come tumbling down?

[Click here](#) [16] for the HollywoodChicago.com podcast interview with producer John Charles Meyer of "Dave Made a Maze."

"Dave Made a Maze" opens in select cities on August 18th. For a complete list, including Chicago (at Facets Cinematheque at 1517 West Fullerton Avenue), [click here](#). [17] Featuring Nick Thune, Meera Rohit Kumbhani, Adam Busch, James Urbaniak, Scott Krinsky and Kirsten Vangsness. Written by Bill Watterson and Steven Sears. Directed by Bill Watterson. Not Rated, but fun for all!



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