

‘Brüno’: Must a Movie Like This Be Broadcast Üiversal?

Submitted by [Ebeth](#) [1] on July 10, 2009 - 1:39am

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Rating: **2.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – As a tribute to “Borat,” let’s start with a lesson in “not” jokes.

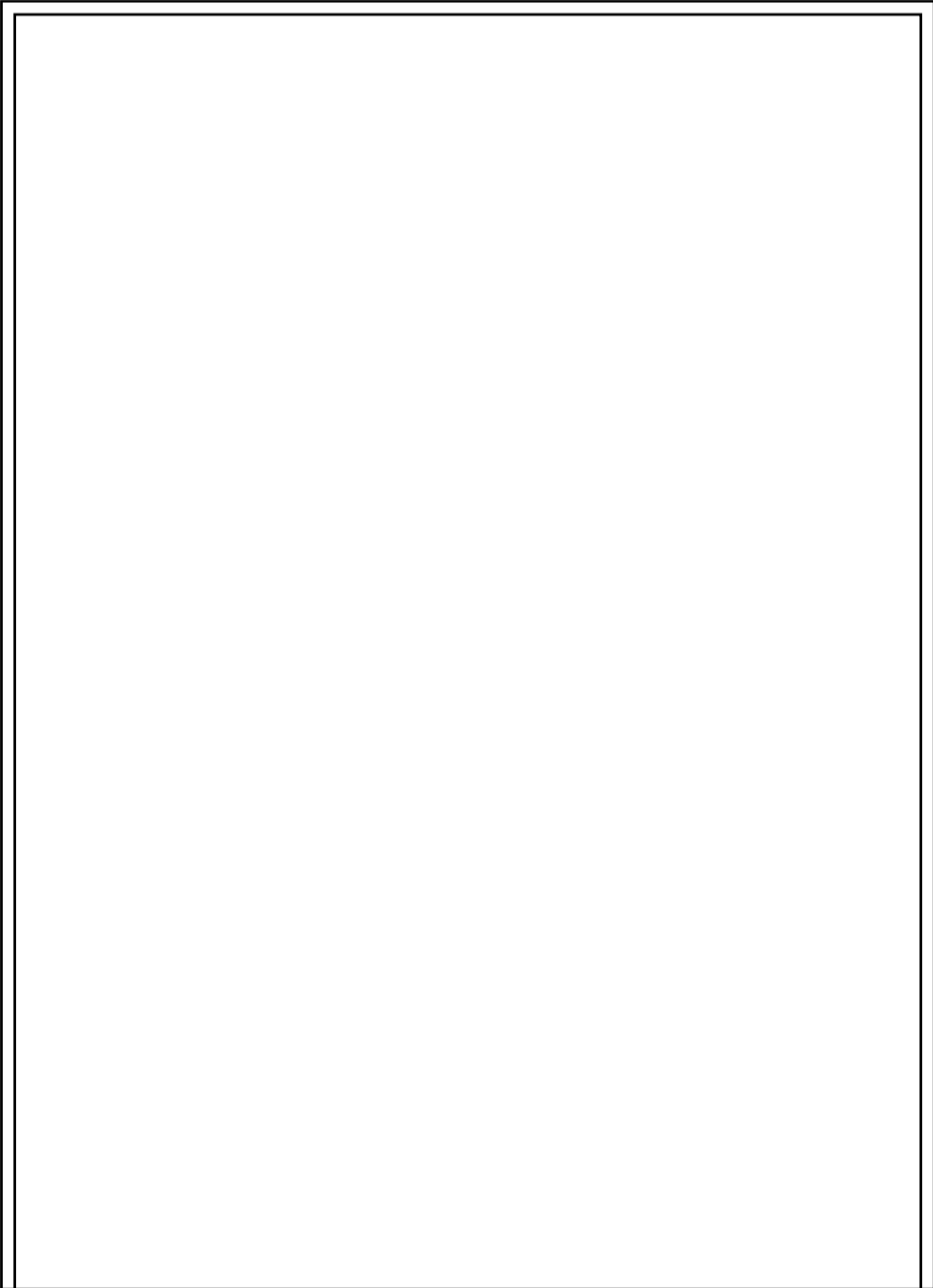
“Brüno” is everything one would hope for in a Sacha Baron Cohen return. The film is hilarious, unpredictable and worth every dollar it will make... **NOT!** There is a great fallacy that has spread in Hollywood and “Brüno” is one of its many victims.

Some making and marketing comedies believe that shocking their audience is an edgy and guaranteed formula for laughter. For the greater part of films like “Brüno,” however, the audience feels only disgust. Far from amused, several leave before the film has concluded.



The comedy “Brüno” from Universal Pictures is Sacha Baron Cohen’s follow up to “Borat”.
Photo credit: Frank Ockenfels, Universal Pictures

Attempting to match the cinematic success of 2006’s “Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan,” “Brüno” follows much the same format. This time we have an Austrian-import title character traveling with his assistant’s assistant, Lutz (Gustaf Hammatsten). Just as Borat did in 2006, Brüno meets with politicians, celebrities and members of the global community for his own special brand of interview.





The comedy “Brüno” from Universal Pictures is Sacha Baron Cohen’s follow up to “Borat”.

Photo credit: Frank Ockenfels, Universal Pictures

However, Borat struck a responsive chord because of the innocence and humanity of the character. We empathized with him and enjoyed laughing (for the most part) at his supposed naiveté.

Baron Cohen’s Brüno proves to be nothing more than a self-absorbed histrionic who is constantly foul just for foul’s sake. For Brüno, emotional depth is a faux accessory worn as low as his Dolce & Gabbana belt.

The mention of scenes like Brüno drinking champagne from his boyfriend Diesel’s (Clifford Bañagale) buttocks or his trip to the “Pink Cheeks Anal Bleaching Salon” amply makes the point.

These images – compounded by swinger’s party sex scenes, footage of Brüno and reality star Brittny Gastineau critiquing celebrity ultrasound pictures while loudly concluding that Jamie Lynn Spears should “abort!” her baby and a scene where Brüno feigns sex acts on the supposed ghost of Millie from Millie Vanilli – all make us wish for a selective delete button on one’s memory.

As if these aren’t surefire ways to get a reaction, the filmmakers throw in Baron Cohen’s penis. When they feel its dancing and spinning may not be enough, the penis talks to us. This gets a reaction. But *what* reaction?

Equally as bemusing, the film ends with the antithesis of a “We Are the World”-like effort as Bono, Sting, Snoop Dogg, Chris Martin and Slash collaborate with Brüno on an incredibly contrived-for-the-cameos theme song. Awful.



The comedy “Brüno” from Universal Pictures is Sacha Baron Cohen’s follow up to “Borat”.
Photo credit: Mark Schwartzbard, Universal Pictures

To Sacha Baron Cohen’s credit, the man is one fabulous character actor. Many declared Baron Cohen’s career in “shockumentaries” over after the success of “Borat” simply because most of the world would easily recognize him.



The comedy “Brüno” from Universal Pictures is Sacha Baron Cohen’s follow up to “Borat”.
Photo credit: Universal Pictures

But not only does he transform into Brüno with hair color, massive waxing and a new wardrobe but the man is able to change his entire *demeanor* including the intricacies of his posture and facial expressions.

And the film is not completely void of comedy. An ironic interview with Paula Abdul discussing her humanitarian efforts while she’s seated on one of Brüno’s “Mexican chair people” is certainly funny up to a point.


And Brüno’s confusion of the terms “Hamas” and “humus” left me giggling when I later dipped my pita bread.

Whether “Brüno” is to be deemed a successful film depends on the intent of the filmmakers. Due to the rampant and heavy marketing of the film as a comedy, one assumes that it’s a “comedy” the creative team: director Larry Charles and writers Anthony Hines, Dan Mazer, Jeff Schaffer, Peter Baynham and Sacha Baron Cohen intended to make.

However, the film’s true impact is one of profound sadness. Many scenes play as a behind-the-scenes look at the darkest of human behavior. Crowds merely look on as Brüno unpacks a baby sent through the airport baggage claim while *no one* seems to strive to help the child.

At a casting session Brüno holds in Sherman Oaks, Calif., parents casually agree to allow their children to be exposed to bees, wild animals, heavy machinery, propulsion at high speeds without a car seat and a 25 percent weight-loss goal within a week all in the name of “fame”.

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It’s this team of ugly “characters” that leaves us thinking about what we’ve seen (though we may not want to long afterward).

Though not necessarily in its intended purpose, Brüno is effective at this level. Those expecting this film to bring a Borat-level banter and brouhaha will leave drastically disappointed. Those looking for a commentary on the sad state of the world will leave just slightly more depressed than when they arrived. Said simply, Brüno disappoints.

“Brüno” stars Sacha Baron Cohen, Gustaf Hammarsten, Clifford Bañagale, Chibundu Orukwowu, Josh Meyers, Bono, Chris Martin, Elton John and Slash. The film, which opened on July 10, 2009, is rated “R” for pervasive strong and crude sexual content, graphic nudity and language. “Brüno” has a running time of 83 minutes.



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