

‘Cirque du Freak: The Vampire’s Assistant’ With John C. Reilly Not Freaky Enough

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on October 23, 2009 - 2:51pm

- [Brian Tallerico](#) [2]
- [Chris Massoglia](#) [3]
- [Cirque du Freak: The Vampire's Assistant](#) [4]
- [Frankie Faison](#) [5]
- [Jessica Carlson](#) [6]
- [John C. Reilly](#) [7]
- [Josh Hutcherson](#) [8]
- [Ken Watanabe](#) [9]
- [Michael Cerveris](#) [10]
- [Movie Review](#) [11]
- [Orlando Jones](#) [12]
- [Patrick Fugit](#) [13]
- [Ray Stevenson](#) [14]
- [Salma Hayek](#) [15]



Rating: **2.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – For everything that Paul Weitz’s “Cirque du Freak: The Vampire’s Assistant” does right, there’s something about the film that just doesn’t work. More manic than quirky and more cluttered than consistent, “Cirque” features a few great performances and interesting characters but they’re sabotaged by the other members of this cinematic freak show.

With a plot that plays like what “Beetlejuice”-era Tim Burton might have done with the current vampire craze (“True Blood,” “The Twilight Saga’s New Moon”), “Cirque du Freak: The Vampire’s Assistant” is an adaptation of the books by Darren Shan that is constantly shooting itself in the foot through bad editing, a distracting supporting cast, a super-dull lead, and far too much expository dialogue. A non-ending that tries to set up the franchise a la “The Golden Compass” doesn’t help the feeling that you’ve just watched a tragically incomplete film.



(L to R) Crepsley (John C. Reilly) makes a curious proposal to Darren (Chris Massoglia) in Cirque Du Freak: The Vampires Assistant.

Photo credit: David Lee

Darren (newcomer Chris Massoglia) is a high-school kid with an obsession with spiders. His best friend Steve (Josh Hutcherson) is the more mischievous of the two and his goth obsession happens to be with vampires. The two are thrilled when a mysterious limo with plates that read

“DES-TINY” toss them a flyer for the ‘Cirque du Freak,” a traveling show stopping in their town that night.



(L to R) Darren (Chris Massoglia) is introduced by Crepsley (John C. Reilly) to the freak show in
Cirque Du Freak: The Vampires Assistant.
Photo credit: David Lee

Darren and Steve head to the show and the audience is introduced to the massive supporting cast including the Wolfman (Tom Woodruff Jr.), Gertha Teeth (Kristen Schaal), Rhamus Twobellies (Frankie Faison), Alexander Ribs (Orlando Jones), Madame Truska (Salma Hayek), Corma Limbs (Jane Krakowski), Evra the Snake Boy (Patrick Fugit), and the MC of the show, Mr. Tall (Ken Watanabe). Of course, the star of the evening is a vampire named Larten Crepsley (John C. Reilly) and his magic spider named Octa.

After the show, Darren sneaks back stage to catch another glimpse of Octa and ends up stealing the creature. Meanwhile, Steve straight-up asks Crepsley to turn him into a creature of the night but is denied access into this immortal club. After Octa bites Steve, the two former friends are thrust into another ancient war between the peaceful vampires led by Crepsley (and a cameo from Willem Dafoe) and the violent ones known as the vampinese. Manipulating both sides is the twisted Mr. Tiny (Michael Cerveris) and his gross lackey Murlaugh (Ray Stevenson). Darren becomes Crepsley’s assistant and a half-vampire and Steve becomes a ward of the dark side. Darren gets a monkey girl love interest (Jessica Carlson) and the film officially pushes the “cluttered with characters” threshold to the limit.

Most of the supporting characters in “Cirque du Freak” fail to register at all with recognizable faces like Jones, Hayek, and Krakowski ending up more forgettable than anything else. Only Fugit steals every scene he’s in as a snake boy who really just wants to be an Emo band.

All that saves “Cirque” from total disaster and what makes a potential sequel something not worth totally dreading is the typically strong work by John C. Reilly. Recalling Michael Keaton’s work in “Beetlejuice” or Jack Nicholson’s in “The Witches of Eastwick,” Reilly beautifully blends creepy and charismatic. He nearly saves “Cirque” from itself.

Ultimately, “Cirque du Freak: The Vampire’s Assistant” feels like it was mangled at some point in production. Either the screenplay was re-written too many times or things got really freaky in the editing room but there are too many awkward tone transitions and scenes that fall flat. It is a rare film that can be both cluttered with small characters and subplots and this boring at the same time.

Finally, filmmakers really need to make sure their film stands on its own and not just as a lead-in to a potential franchise. If a screenplay features characters talking about “prophecy” and what will happen at nightfall in the final minutes, send it back for a rewrite. The great franchise openers like “Fellowship of the Ring” actually have climaxes and endings that stand on their own. “Cirque” clearly wants to be the opening act for a film franchise. With this lackluster opening act, it would be truly freaky if a sequel actually happens.

‘Cirque du Freak: The Vampire’s Assistant’ stars John C. Reilly, Chris Massoglia, Josh Hutcherson, Jessica Carlson, Michael Cerveris, Ray Stevenson, Patrick Fugit, Ken Watanabe, Salma Hayek, Orlando Jones, Frankie Faison, Willem Dafoe, and Jane Krakowski. It was written by Paul Weitz & Brian Koppelman and directed by Koppelman. It opens on October 23rd, 2009. It is rated PG-13.



[16]

By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [17]
Content Director
HollywoodChicago.com
brian@hollywoodchicago.com [16]

Source URL (retrieved on Apr 23 2024 - 5:39pm):

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/9121/cirque-du-freak-the-vampires-assistant-with-john-c-reilly-not-freaky-enough>

Links:

[1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/briantt>

[2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/brian-tallerico>

[3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/chris-massoglia>

[4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/cirque-du-freak-the-vampires-assistant>

- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/frankie-faison>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/jessica-carlson>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/john-c-reilly>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/josh-hutcherson>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/ken-watanabe>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/michael-cerveris>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/review.html>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/orlando-jones>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/patrick-fugit>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/ray-stevenson>
- [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/salma-hayek>
- [16] <mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [17] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#BRIAN>