

## 'Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues' Defies Pattern of Comedy Sequels

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on December 17, 2013 - 1:38pm

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

Comedy sequels are SO rarely worthwhile. Most good comedy is dependent on being fresh, new, and unpredictable – words not commonly used to describe sequels. For every “Wayne’s World 2,” there are a dozen films of the caliber of “Ghostbusters 2,” “Arthur 2,” and “Caddyshack II” – movies that are so bad that they almost diminish the legacy of their predecessors. And so I entered the long-awaited and over-promoted return of Ron Burgundy in Adam McKay’s “Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues” with a deep degree of trepidation...that disappeared almost immediately. “Anchorman 2” is funny, sometimes very much so, and justifies the wait for a new adventure for cinema’s favorite newscaster.

Ron Burgundy (Will Ferrell) and Veronica Corningstone (Christina Applegate) are at the top of their profession, anchoring in New York City and living life in fabulous love. It all falls apart when their boss Mack Harken (Harrison Ford) breaks them up, pushing Corningstone to the Nightly News and sending Burgundy off the rails. It’s not long before he’s drunkenly MC-ing a dolphin show at Sea World, seemingly destined for obscurity. Enter one of the most important TV developments in the history of the form – 24-hour news.



Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues

Photo credit: Paramount



McKay and Ferrell cleverly build "The Legend Continues" on the fact that CNN actually created their brand by going to local newscasters from markets around the country and bringing them aboard their team. And so Ron Burgundy is approached to take the graveyard shift at GNN, the fictional version of the cable news network. He gets the band back together by tracking down Brian Fantana (Paul Rudd), Champ Kind (David Koechner), and Brick Tamland (Steve Carell), but they're still mocked by the more handsome, TV-friendly anchors like Jack Lime (James Marsden). Can Ron Burgundy reclaim his throne? And how will the VERY not politically-correct Burgundy deal with his gorgeous, African-American boss (Meagan Good).

Some might say that the plot for "Anchorman 2" is merely a structure on which to place Ferrell and McKay's unique brand of humor but the writers actually do have deeper goals than most comedy sequel writers. Whereas it would have been remarkably easy just to recycle the setting and jokes from the first film, McKay & Ferrell use the birth of 24-hour news to comment on how it was a development that diminished the overall quality of the form. News became obsessed with grabbing attention more than delivering information and it's a problem that continues to this day.

Don't worry. This is not a message movie. "Anchorman 2" is only built upon a commentary on the failure of TV journalism. It is primarily a showcase for the comic timing of its incredible cast. The first act of "The Legend Continues," in which the "band gets back together," is the funniest half-hour of film in 2013. Catching up with where Fantana, Kind, and Tamland ended up in the last half-decade and watching them reunite is simply hysterical. There's a scene in a fast-food restaurant that nearly had me in tears. The incredible pace of that first act can't be held over the film's too-long running time (every Apatow production needs to run nearly two hours now for some inexplicable reason) but it justifies the price of a movie ticket before its halfway over, which is something you can't say about most modern comedies, especially sequels.



Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues

Photo credit: Paramount

What I love about the Ferrell/McKay brand of humor is that it seems to honestly come from a place entirely bereft of desperation. Almost all modern comedies are made by people begging you to laugh to the degree that you can practically see flop sweat on the performers. What will appeal to the widest demographic? Ferrell/McKay don't play to the easy jokes. They don't mind losing viewers in extended bits like the one in which Burgundy nurses a stray shark back to health. They don't mind jokes that some will deem as racist. It's risky humor but it's 100% confident. "This makes US laugh, maybe you'll like it too." And that's where the great comedies have always come from – a place of confidence. It takes true conviction of concept to make characters this dumb work.

Even when "Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues" does go back to the well, repeating jokes from the first film, it does so in unexpected ways. I didn't mind the recalls and they're few and far enough between that they'll keep the viewers who just want to "hear the hits" engaged enough to pay attention to the new material. Some bits, mostly the ones involving Carell's increasingly brain-dead Brick, go on way too long, but it never sinks the piece overall. The minute a bit starts to reach that breaking point, the gang moves on to something else that makes them laugh. To a surprising degree, you will too.

*"Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues" stars Will Ferrell, Paul Rudd, Meagan Good, Christina Applegate, Steve Carell, Kristen Wiig, David Koechner, James Marsden, Greg Kinnear, and Harrison Ford. It was written by Adam McKay & Will Ferrell and directed by McKay. It opens on December 18, 2013.*

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