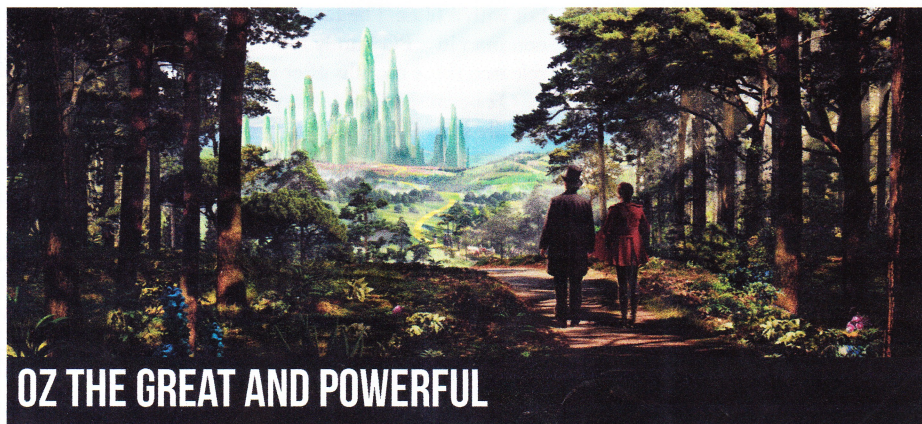




Film & Feature

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OZ THE GREAT AND POWERFUL

NEVER SHOULD'VE LEFT KANSAS.

Veronica Lane

Cast

James Franco - Oscar
Mila Kunis - Theodora
Michelle Williams - Glinda
Rachel Weisz - Evanora

Directed by

Sam Raimi

Written by

Mitchell Kapner
David Lindsay-Abaire

Based on the novel by

L. Frank Baum

Adventure, Family, Fantasy

Rated PG for sequences of action and scary images, and brief mild language

130 minutes

The Wizard of Oz (1939) was my life. I was Glinda for my first Halloween, and I have all of the collectible dolls. If DVDs had a speedometer tracking how many times you watched them, my copy of The Wizard of Oz would be well over 1,000. It was reinforcement for my perception on life and how I would treat my friends. It was a story about how working hard can still lead to disappointment and that no matter what, there are people who support you. The Wizard of Oz is my favorite movie of all time, modern films included.

But this.

This movie killed me.

Oz the Great and Powerful (2013) is a prequel to The Wizard of Oz and features James Franco, Mila Kunis, Michelle Williams, and Rachel Weisz. Sam Raimi, director of Spider Man (2002), Spider Man 2 (2004), Spider Man 3 (2007), The Evil Dead (1981), and Evil Dead II (1987), decided to direct this film about Oscar, a con man who falls into an unknown world of wonder and enchantment, but also falls into a power struggle between three witches that will determine the fate of himself and this magical world. It fits into the adventure/family/fantasy genre perfectly (pretty much the only thing it does right), and attracted theater audiences of parents who thought, "Hey, maybe they'll like this" and people with nostalgia for the glittering world of Oz. There's a great nod to the black and white and small screen format of The Wizard of Oz' Kansas, then an elegant transition to a wide screen, abundantly colorful world overflowing with CGI. There's a Dorothy Gale reference, a reference to the poppy fields, everything that was rightful to include in a backstory of the land of Oz.

Annnnnnd that's all the good this movie has to offer.

The graphics, oh man the graphics. I don't know what to say. It's like a CGI unicorn directed the designers and told them there wasn't enough green screen and shiny objects. If Raimi had just sprinkled the graphics instead of dumping the entire can of animation on the film, I would've rated this movie 3 out of 5 clicks. From animated dust particles, to the entire set, this movie varies very little in live action after the introduction.

Theodora can't be more bland. All she is is sad, codependent, and very insecure, even after the wickedification she is put through. The only thing that changes is her makeup, wardrobe, and evil cackle. I get it, you're a spiteful witch whose heart was crushed by your sister's guiding

hand, but why can't the Wicked Witch of the West be deeper than a romantic oopsy with a man she just met?

The introduction of Glinda is interesting, even suspenseful. We aren't given a very good first impression of her until she shows her face. But that was all she is. A pretty, kind, extremely magical face. Glinda becomes Damsel in Distress #2 after Theodora, which is a total "wut" when compared to the independent, strong, confident Glinda of *The Wizard of Oz*.

Evanora. The Wizard of Oz knocked out this Wicked Witch of the East when Dorothy touched down in Oz, so there wasn't much to go off of, but Evanora, woah momma. She's actually a character with personality and life, evil terribly warped personality and life, but more so than everyone else. Evanora has priorities and goals.

Oscar the con artist is just James Franco in a top hat. Oscar is supposed to be slimy, crooked, thieving, and a liar. *This Is the End* (2013) has Franco portraying himself as the same character but with a filter. The fact that Franco performs as a man who becomes a beloved (still crooked) con man in a PG family movie then plays the same character in an R rated comedy that was released three months after is odd. It's hard to believe Franco can be the prophesied wizard of Oz because of his history in film, but even the basic performance of this role is empty and heavily scripted.

Due to this casting choice, Oscar doesn't really become likable. He doesn't grow up, he just puts his talents into use by tricking the realm into believing he's a great and powerful wizard. His followers, other than a creepy doll, a doormat flying monkey, and Glinda, believe Oz protects the emerald city and those who reside in the land of his domain with unmatched powers. This is totally fine, that's how it's supposed to go, okay. But his attitude didn't really change. Has James Franco's Oscar become more empathetic towards everyone? Not really. He's pretty much saving the land because a beautiful woman would be his prize and he would live outside of the law.

This movie is the bane of the legacy of Oz. The acting, the graphics, the character backgrounds, everything important to the magic of film making is emotionless, overdone, and underdeveloped, in that order. Rachel Weisz' acting as Evanora was the most believable and



she wasn't even the main lead. I think that if the performers went with an accent or dialect used before modern terminology (children raised in the modern day can't have such a low attention span that they'd miss everything) or an attitude that didn't follow that of their previous roles, this movie could've been a 3.5 click flick. Hell maybe even a 4, even without the improvements to the graphics. If the graphics were toned down and more live action performances and actual sets were used, this movie would've been respectable to *The Wizard of Oz*.

All in all, this movie should be a movie you see on television while scrolling through the guide with nothing else to watch. Don't buy it. Don't go to the movies to see it. Don't even show it to a date as a way to bond over their love of *The Wizard of Oz* and your love of James Franco.

A very try hard film that should've been as easy as breathing.

Veronica Lane | October 10 2015

Oz the Great and Powerful. Dir. Sam Raimi. Perf. James Franco, Mila Kunis, Rachel Weisz, and Michelle Williams. Walt Disney Pictures, 2013. Web.

"*Oz the Great and Powerful*." Film Poster. 2013. Web. 12 Oct., 2015.

Hiatte, Nicholas. "*Oz the Great and Powerful*." Digital image. Concept Art World. Disney. Web. 12 Oct. 2015.



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