

<http://www.pocket-lint.com/review/3257/be-kind-rewind-dvd-review>

Be Kind Rewind - DVD

Jack Black is back in many guises

by Neil Queen published on 27 June 2008

The fact that a talent as kooky as Michel Gondry can make mainstream, big-budget Hollywood movies is a cracking illustration of the healthy and liberated state of modern culture.

Be Kind Rewind, his third major film, follows the astounding *Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind* and the wonderful *The Science Of Sleep*. Set in a small humdrum town in America, it stars Jack Black and Mos Def as Jerry and Mike, two losers who waste their days in the titular dilapidated video store run by Mr Fletcher (Danny Glover) that's being threatened with closure. While Fletcher's away on a trip, Mike is left in charge. During this time, Jerry becomes magnetised when a face-off with a power plant goes badly wrong. Magnets and videos don't mix - and he ends up wiping all the store's tapes.

Needing a desperate solution to stop the shop going down the pan, the pair decide to recreate the films in the hope that nobody notices.

This is basically the core charm of the film; starting with *Ghostbusters*, *Rush Hour 2* and *Robocop*, they bash out shonky versions that have none of the actual original details, but a million times the charm. Won over by the dumb-ass charm, these DIY or "sweded" versions take off, turning around the shop's fortunes.

It's only when the "sweding" takes place that the film takes any real shape or drive. Deprived of the writing skills of the equally eccentric Charlie Kaufman - who wrote *Eternal Sunshine*, *Being John Malkovich* and *Adaptation* - *Be Kind* only offers a surface-level creativity, as although a strong idea, the story isn't executed with any conviction or depth, characterisation is minimal and the script flickers rather than burns brightly.

But let's not lose sight of Gondry's clear genius. Having made some of the most visually



...cont.

innovative and astounding music videos possibly ever (seek out The Work Of Director Michel Gondry DVD for ample evidence), many of us would kill to have one idea as good as his; Gondry's head is a reservoir of them.

Picasso once said that you find your originality when you try to copy someone and get it wrong - never has there been a better example than here. Deliberately rejecting the details of the originals, the "sweding" seeks to bottle the essence of a film and the smudged fingerprint of memory, and the end results are as imaginative as they are childishly hilarious. There are some moments of pure lo-fi magic, one solution to the problem of doing night scenes during the day is simply incredible. This idea of creating happy accidents is applied throughout the film, as the extras explain how Gondry favoured untrained performers so as to get a less regimented result.

So it's visually stunning, but short on depth and substance. But maybe the greater issue is the fact that it's too clearly a vanity project for Gondry, and a metaphor for how he views his working methods and himself as an artist. Himself a director who eschews conventional structure for a freestyle DIY approach, Jerry and Mike's success comes across as a self-congratulatory pat on the back for what Gondry; has to date achieved; that his way of creating is more noble than the norm. Actually, he's probably right. It just seems a tad arrogant coming from him.

VERDICT

The main complaint from critics was that it was little more than a collection of YouTube clips - but these in themselves confirm the sheer ferociousness of Gondry's talent. The fact that he isn't a word god shouldn't distract from the fact that he does have something very special to offer the world.

Rating: 12

Starring: Jack Black, Mos Def, Danny Glover, Mia Farrow

At a glance

What is it?

Comedy

Good

Some of the most imaginative visual gags in recent Hollywood history

Bad

A surface-level charm that lacks depth

Verdict

A brave attempt at something original, that sadly falls short of being something special

Price 19.99 / £;24.99 Blu-ray

Our score

6/10

Your score

?/10

<http://www.pocket-lint.com/review/3257/be-kind-rewind-dvd-review>

...cont.

Directed by: Michel Gondry

Extras: Making of documentary. Featurettes