



Jack Black and Mos Def get shiny in *Be Kind Rewind*

Eraserhead

Jack Black gets magnetic

BE KIND REWIND: Written and directed by Michel Gondry. Cinematography, Ellen Kuras. Music, Jean-Michel Bernard. Starring Jack Black, Mos Def, Danny Glover, Melonie Diaz and Mia Farrow. New Line Cinema, 2008. PG-13. 101 minutes. ★★☆☆☆

As if Jack Black's unruly body isn't by itself a powerful contraceptive, imagine it flooded with a million volts of electricity. Positively unattractive, you say? Not according to *Be Kind Rewind*, the ridiculous film in which Jerry (played by Black) turns magnetic while attempting to sabotage a power plant. I won't go into how the monkey-wrenching comes about — there are some mutterings about electromagnetic mind control, which are as old as Gilligan's teeth — except to say that, in the aftermath, you wouldn't want him handling your cassette tapes. Or your collection of VHS tapes, which happens to be what Jerry's friend Mike (Mos Def) handles for a living: Mike is the only employee at Be Kind Rewind, a dilapidated all-VHS rental store in which Jerry spends most of each day hanging about.

When Jerry erases the video collection at Be Kind Rewind, it appears the store, like its inventory, is headed for obsolescence. But the friends are undeterred. To save the store from going broke — and to save the building from being demolished — Jerry and Mike create low-tech re-enactments of beloved films, a process they refer to as "sweding," the conceit being that the films are from Sweden, thus justifying higher rental prices. Their first effort is to swede the film *Ghostbusters*; to the infectious beats of the Ray Parker Jr. song, *Be Kind Rewind* briefly springs to life. The film, formerly tight, feels inspired and improvisational. For their wardrobe, Jerry and Mike borrow clothing from the cleaners. For supporting cast, they dress up Jerry's mute co-mechanic. Requests for sweded films pour in. In a terrific, seamless montage, we watch them re-imagine *King Kong*, *Boyz in the Hood* and *2001: A Space Odyssey*. New customers are required to

submit report cards and blood types. Jerry thinks he's going to be a star.

When lawyers show up claiming copyright infringement, director Michel Gondry (*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*) lays his cards on the table. It turns out he's holding too many. (Jerry's reaction to the lawyers is "Bootleggers? We don't sell boots.") I've deliberately spared you the film's numerous subplots, which include Alzheimer's, a rival rental outlet and a fictional jazz musician, because they only serve to cancel out the limited charms

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of the film. The store's owner, Mr. Fletcher (Danny Glover) is a cantankerous, unlikable fellow who still thinks he can convert the store to DVD. Mos Def is earnest and sincere, with a proud humility that hints at bigger roles to come. Jack Black, that agile manatee, that beautiful contradiction, is the film's great near-miss. Although occasionally he gets to spew portmanteau — "non-sequitary" and "Shakespearean" are highlights — I felt like I was stuck in *Orange County*, a place I don't need to revisit.

Like a runaway satellite or a shaggy transvestite, *Be Kind Rewind* is a confusion of messages and signals, few of which hit their mark. The film is haphazard in concept and execution, but the underlying weakness is the screenplay, which strives to examine community and authenticity but, paradoxically, feels derivative and inauthentic. What emerges from Gondry's indiscriminate script is an attempt to re-create the inventiveness, the grounded whimsy, of *Eternal Sunshine*, but that film, although superbly directed by Gondry, was written by Charlie Kaufman (*Being John Malkovich*). Gondry's talents, first developed while creating groundbreaking music videos, require collaboration to flourish. In order for the whimsical-philosophical comedy film to work, it needs to be both sweet and funny. *Be Kind Rewind* is very, very sweet. **EW**

Be Kind Rewind is now playing at Cinemark.

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12:15, 2:40, 5:10, 7:45, 10:10
NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN R
12:55, 3:55, 7:00, 10:00
U2 3D G
3:20, 5:30, 7:40, 9:50
VANTAGE POINT PG13
11:50, 12:40, 2:15, 3:05, 4:45, 5:40, 7:15, 8:05, 9:45, 10:30
CHARLIE BARTLETT R
4:15, 10:15
BE KIND REWIND PG13
1:40, 4:35, 7:25, 10:10
WITLESS PROTECTION PG13
7:00, 9:35

THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES PG
11:45, 1:50, 2:25, 4:30, 5:05, 7:55, 10:35
DEFINITELY, MAYBE PG13
2:05, 4:55, 7:45, 10:35
STEP UP 2 THE STREETS PG13
1:55, 5:00, 7:30, 10:05
HANNAH MONTANA & MILEY CYRUS: BEST OF BOTH WORLDS CONCERT NR
1:10
JUMPER PG13
12:45, 1:30, 3:10, 4:10, 5:35, 6:45, 8:00, 9:15, 10:25
FOOL'S GOLD PG13
1:45, 4:40, 7:35, 10:25
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[12:45] 4:10, 7:40, 10:15
I AM LEGEND PG13
[11:50, 12:35] 2:15, 3:00, 4:40, 5:25, 7:05, 7:50, 9:30, 10:20
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[12:00] 3:40, 7:00, 10:10

LARS AND THE REAL GIRL PG13
[12:05] 2:35, 5:05, 7:45, 10:25
MICHAEL CLAYTON R
[12:15] 4:20, 7:25, 10:05
STRANGE WILDERNESS R
[12:10] 2:40, 4:55, 7:30, 9:40
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