

Film Close-Up: Jim Carrey

by Joey_Berlin

Jim Carrey finally tackles his first starring role in a serious thriller with "The Number 23." The Canadian-born comedian restrains his comic impulses to play a relatively regular guy in this mind-bender with an intriguing concept.

JIM CARREY - Jim Carrey stars as Walter Sparrow in the thriller 'The Number 23.' CNS Photo courtesy of Christine Loss.

Carrey stars as a dogcatcher and a family man whose wife, played by Virginia Madsen, gives him a book called "The Number 23." As he reads it, Carrey's character finds spooky parallels to his own past, and develops a psychotic obsession over the number 23. Directed by Joel Schumacher, "The Number 23" offers a field day for paranoid numerologists, who for years have noticed lots of weird coincidences surrounding the number, which some people have dubbed "23 phenomena." They claim for instance, that Julius Caesar was stabbed 23 times, and William Shakespeare was born and died on the 23rd of April. Carrey's last film, "Fun With Dick and Jane," was a hit and the 45-year-old actor has been romantically linked to Jenny McCarthy for more than a year.

Q: You had already renamed your company from Pit Bull Productions to JC 23 Entertainment before you got involved with the movie, "The Number 23." How did you first get into this 23 phenomena thing?

A: Well you see, it started out for me when a friend of mine in Canada handed it down to me. He was seeing it everywhere, adding up license plates, all these things. He had a book full of 23 phenomena. I said he was crazy and then I started seeing it everywhere. And then one day a few years later after it had kind of entered my life in a big way and I was driving my friends crazy, somebody handed me a book on the 23rd Psalm. You know, "the valley of the shadow of death" and living without fear, basically, knowing you're taken care of. So I thought that was a great progression, from Pit Bull Productions, which is kind of about grabbing hold of life and just not letting it go, to not sweating it, you know? So I named the company that.

Q: And how did you get involved with this film?

A: I was explaining the JC 23 name to a friend and he said, "Well I just read a script called 'The Number 23.'" And I said, "I have to see it." I read the script and was compelled by it. I was freaked out actually, because the first page of the script was actually originally my character trying to capture a pit bull.

Q: Were there any 23 phenomena you noticed while making the movie?

A: Virginia Madsen's son started picking out things. He was sitting there all day long trying to figure out the phenomena on the set, and pointed out that Virginia and I, our names together, were 23 letters. And the same with Joel and me. And it's Joel's 23rd film.

Q: So you are playing an animal catcher in this film. Do you feel your life has come full circle now from "Ace Ventura: Pet Detective?"

A: Well, again, this is the way my life and the universe works, which is very mysterious. Movies find me, and I kind of just allow them to find me. And when it becomes a real good fit, I do them. And in this case it was the 23 phenomenon, and also the fact that he was a dogcatcher was a really nice little wink toward my other work.

Q: This role is probably the most serious one you have taken on. Do you see it as a new artistic direction for you?

A: Well you know, I really have always thought of myself as somebody who lives in the middle of the wheel and is able to go to the extremes, to the outside of the wheel, in any direction. So the best-case scenario for me is to be able to be centered, and then go out and be zany and funny, or do something that really has some depth to it. So there's many different colors to paint with and I would hate to get trapped in one little thing. I always feel like "funny" is an appendage, you know, but it's not my whole body.

Q: Have you ever been obsessed or consumed with anything?

A: Ah, the only thing that's really consumed me is love, from time to time. You know, thinking, "What is it? How do I get it?" All of those things. The rest of it is just my spiritual journey, which has been a good thing that I've been on, and I guess some people would say I'm obsessed with it. But in a really good way. It's just enjoyable, it's not obsessive. I don't really have crazy obsessions about things.

Q: Now that you have Jenny McCarthy in your life, do you feel closer to that place you're trying to get to, as far as finding love?

A: I feel that our relationship happened at a time when I'm more ready than I've ever been in my life to have a relationship. And we also encourage each other, and we're both on the same path. So it's really nice.

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