

All-star 'Hail Caesar' cast delivers a hit



By Howie Nave

First off you can tell right from the start that every actor here loves being in a Coen Brothers movie. And can you blame them? The minds behind such gems as “The Big Lebowski,” “Fargo,” “Burn After Reading” and “Raising Arizona” brothers Ethan and Joel have once again restored my faith in Hollywood by making a movie that is an incredible send up of the movie making industry.

Set in Hollywood in 1951 “Hail, Caesar!” gives us a slice of what it was like when the studios were making movies like a Detroit assembly line factory turning out cars with studio owned actors as the parts to keep the dream machine of movie making running. Throw in a Communist subplot, twin Hollywood gossip columnists (both played brilliantly by Tilda Swinton) and studio fix-it man Eddie Mannix with a Catholic conscience (in one of Josh Brolin’s best roles ever) who’s also the in-house babysitter for Capitol Studios’ actors and you’ve got the ingredients to one of the funniest movies the Coen

Brothers have made in a long time.

The cast of characters is incredible and includes Scarlett Johansson as the sweet and innocent swim-star sweetheart who off camera is a foul-mouthed, knocked up street gal who needs a husband to maintain her studio image of girl next door. And Channing Tatum as a song and dance man? I had no idea he had the moves and was so versatile. And George Clooney as the lead star of the movie within the movie, "Hail, Caesar!", absolutely had the time of his life as the diva actor Baird Whitlock who not blows his lines during climatic moments but is easily swayed to believe that maybe the Russians aren't so bad after all even after he's kidnapped by the Commie bastards!



Clooney is no stranger to the Coen magic having appeared in two of their other off-the-wall flicks, "O Brother, Where Art Thou?" and "Intolerable Cruelty." And leave it to the Coens to introduce a breakout star in the way of a young Alden

Ehrenreich, who plays a singing cowboy star forced to be in a stuffy socialite movie (looking and sounding very uncomfortable) directed by a stuffy British director played by real life Brit Ralph Fiennes in a role he too looked like was relishing the part.

With all of the big name actors in "Hail, Caesar!" it's Brolin's character as Mannix that keeps the movie flowing throughout. He's not only the soul of this flick, but the moral compass going to confessional daily to the point where his priest tells him that he doesn't have to go to confessional every day. Since "Hail, Caesar!" is Mannix's latest and biggest budgeted project that involves Jesus Christ he seeks out the advice from four religious leaders to make sure that Christ is being properly portrayed. Of course the

rabbi (played by Robert Picardo) could really care less because Jesus isn't his God (or son of God) since his peeps (the chosen people) don't believe he's the Messiah. Playing the Protestant clergyman is comedian/actor Allan Havey (AMC's "Mad Men," "The Office," "The Informant!") who's actually Catholic but is such a convincing actor pulled off his Protestant role quite convincingly.

"Hail, Caesar!" has plenty of cameos to not only keep your attention span in "on" mode, but will make you think, "Was that Oscar winning actress Frances McDormand I just saw?" or Jonah Hill in a brief scene as the guy does what it takes to keep the studio's actors on the straight and narrow. It's a good ride throughout and clocks in at 1 hour, 45 minutes and is rated PG-13 for some suggestive content and smoking.

Howie Nave is host/emcee/manager of The Improv at Harveys. You can hear him Monday-Friday 6 to 10am on KRLT FM-93.9.