

The Truman Show (1998)

As I've said before in my *Jim & Andy: The Great Beyond* review, I have never been a Jim Carrey fan as he is the kind of actor whose only appeal lays in finding funny his overacting. I had to think again when I saw Charlie Kaufmann's *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, where Carrey gives a terrific, emotionally deep performance that breaks me every time I watch the film. To be completely fair though, although I forgot, I had already seen his talent many years prior, when one of my high school teachers showed us Peter Weir's *The Truman Show*, a unique, emotional, entertaining as well as thought-provoking film.

Truman Burbank (Jim Carrey) is a normal man, living a normal life — he is a desk clerk for an insurance company, he is happily married to his college sweetheart, Meryl (Laura Linney), and he is best friend with Marlon (Noah Emmerich) since early childhood — in an apparently perfect town, Seahaven, where everyone is always nice, everything is always clean and the sun always shines.

However, known to everyone but Truman, his life is a fake one as it's been completely controlled from the moment he was born by Christof (Ed Harris), a reckless television producer who created an artificial world in a giant studio for Truman to live in and be the star of *The Truman Show*, a 24/7 reality show broadcasting worldwide thanks to hidden cameras that record Truman's every movement. Even the people in Truman's life are fake — from his wife to his friend to his mother (Holland Taylor), they all are actors playing a role.

Truman has accepted his world without asking questions for about thirty years but when a series of weird events take place — a light falling from the sky, the reappearance of his father (Brian Delate) who was supposed to have drowned in a boating accident when Truman was a young boy, and his car radio picks up a station broadcasting his actions as he drives to work — he starts to question his reality and sets out to find out the truth.

While it's not an entirely original concept as it's in some ways reminiscent of George Orwell's *1984* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, *The Truman Show* arguably has an interesting and fascinating premise and it's executed to perfection. The story is simple and easy to follow and yet it manages to be enthralling, suspenseful and exciting from start to finish, while delivering a satire of a media-obsessed, voyeuristic society, a society we sadly still live in twenty-two years later — whether it's "stalking" our favourite celebrity on their Instagram, or tuning into our favourite reality show (it could be *The Bachelor* just as *MasterChef*), we need to take a peek into other people's lives, sometimes even to the point of obsession, to get through the day. *The Truman Show*'s story raises questions regarding the value of privacy and the lack of ethic in the

entertainment business while also talking about freedom — the freedom to be who we want to, to do what we want, to go where we want, to love who we want. It is a cynical, heartbreaking and yet heartwarming and uplifting story, that remains such until the credits begin to roll — it's impossible not to be overjoyed as Truman bows and leaves his artificial world, but almost at the same time, we are slapped in the face with the world's cynicism as two cops, upon realizing that the show is over, shrug and say, "It's over. Let's see what else is on".

A great story isn't the only praisable aspect of Andrew Niccol's screenplay as the titular character too is well-written. Truman Burbank is an absolutely normal and average man; the only interesting thing about him is that there's absolutely nothing interesting about him. He is a kind-hearted, naive and likeable guy-next-door. This is what makes him real and relatable to the public, why people can't stop watching him. And why it's impossible for the audience, both the show and the film's, not to root for him. It wouldn't be fair though to credit Niccol only as Jim Carrey does a terrific job at bringing to the screen a lovable, extremely likeable and sympathetic character with a subtle and tender performance that beautifully combines the actor's comedic and dramatic skills — and while he doesn't give up his physicality and goofiness entirely, he doesn't overdo it and use it to make his character even more lovable and believable.

The supporting cast also delivers strong performances, the show-stealer obviously being Ed Harris as he gives a terrific, mesmerizing performance as the television producer with a god complex, opting for a more low-key approach to the role rather than giving the typical madmen performance.

The Truman Show also has a great balance of comedy and drama, with moments that will make you laugh and chuckle, and others that will fill your eyes with tears. The set design and cinematography are also pretty good, and the score fits the film very well. Ultimately, this is a terrific comedy-drama that pretty much portrays the society we live in. It is a film that you will find yourself thinking about afterwards, one should definitely watch if you haven't already.

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