Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Rating: «««« out of «««««

Running Time: 102 minutes

T**his film will be available via video on demand streaming platforms June 26**.

Stand-up comedian and ex-host of *The Daily Show* Jon Stewart is known for his sharp commentary on government policy, political figures, the media and current events in general. Since retiring from his position on the show in 2015, he has maintained a relatively low-profile. This week sees the release of a new film which he wrote and directed. As one might have expected, *Irresistible* finds Stewart in familiar territory, poking fun at the election process and hoping to drive home a larger point about its effect on the general populace.

Democratic campaign strategist Gary Zimmer (Steve Carell) finds himself a laughing stock in his field after losing the 2016 election to Donald Trump. Knowing that his party’s failure in the election may have resulted from being unable to make his candidate relatable to rural America, he sees a sign of hope after viewing a video on Youtube. It features Wisconsin farmer and ex-military man Jack Hastings (Chris Cooper) standing up for the rights of immigrants at a town council meeting. Zimmer convinces Hastings to run for mayor as a Democratic candidate, hoping that his election to office will start to turn the tide nationally.

As he attempts to train the well-intentioned, but blunt farmer, it draws attention, including that of Zimmer’s sworn enemy, Republican strategist Faith Brewster (Rose Byrne). The competition gains national attention and more money is thrown behind the campaign from the parties and their donors.

Early sections of the movie depict Zimmer’s arrival in the community and his inability to relate to the townspeople. Truthfully, these bits may be the clunkiest aspect of the feature. The protagonist’s complete inability to relate to the locals feels a bit forced and the jokes are hit and miss. Even the behavior of the locals seems stiff.

In fact, the film may all be too low-key and low energy early on. The movie certainly is attempting to build a quirky vibe for the town and its residents, but has trouble pulling it off in the first act.

While it’s a slow build, things do end up improving significantly with the arrival of Brewster who freely admits that she takes great joy demoralizing Zimmer and seeing him suffer. It’s fun to watch their grudges play out over the course of the campaign. Once the national parties get involved and the two go head-to-head using full-blown, but familiar political antics against each other’s clients, the jokes land and the laughs come more readily.

Effective bits include an amusing series of ads for the candidates, as well as the introduction of some assistants, a pollster and analytic specialists (including Topher Grace and Natasha Lyonne), who seek to change the mindsets of voters. This leads to an amusing misread of one demographic in a specific town region. And on a more serious note, the filmmaker also scores some points in detailing inherent problems in the fundraising process. Co-star Cooper also delivers an effective, heartfelt speech late in the film about the broken electoral system, poking fun at elitists.

Finally, the movie also offers a strong climactic payoff, which ultimately makes up for the awkward opening act. The big Election Day itself offers unexpected and surprising moments that deliver the film’s ultimate point with great effectiveness. Honestly, this is a title that will likely play better the second time around. In the end, *Irresistible* requires a little patience early on as it slowly develops its themes and issues.

However, once the election hits its stride and the movie begins firing on all cylinders, it surges ahead and wins the day. This is a funny and even heartfelt satire detailing the depths that political campaigns will sink to in order to influence and secure our vote.

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