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AMSTERDAM MAGIC SOCIETY



UNLOCK THE ILLUSION

HOW YOU SEE ME 3

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ISSUE 1

PRODUCED BY BOAZ YAKON & EDWARD RICKOURT DIRECTED BY ERIC WARREN SINGER SCREENPLAY BY SETH GRAHAM SMITH AND MICHAEL LESSLIE AND PAUL WERNICK & RHETT REESE BASED UPON THE BOOK BY RUBEN FLEISSCHER

FRITZ WITH A Z

1/

As I write this, I've finally seen the movie *Now You See Me 3* together with a few members of the Amsterdam Magic Show. To our delight, the film once again manages to make magic look effortlessly cool to a lay audience.

3 p.



4 p.

2/

NOW YOU SEE ME: NOW YOU DON'T

FRANS DE GROOT

Now You See Me: Now You Don't, the third entry in the magician adventure franchise, that is still ridiculous in presentation, yet entertaining in the moment

HOW A FRANCHISE ABOUT MAGICIANS BECAME A SURPRISE SMASH HIT

8 p.

3/

BARRY LEVITT & FRANS DE GROOT

It's one of those ideas that, once you hear it, you can't believe it hasn't been done a million times: A group of magicians use their tricks to pull off epic heists, transferring large sums from giant corporations back into the hands of the people.



12 p.

DANNY URBANUS FOOLED PENN & TELLER

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This magazine is a production of the Amsterdam Magic Society. If you like to contribute, send this to our editor & designer, Frans de Groot: amsterdammagicsociety@gmail.com

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DEAR READER

As I write this, I've finally seen the movie *Now You See Me 3* together with a few members of the Amsterdam Magic Show. To our delight, the film once again manages to make magic look effortlessly cool to a lay audience. And how "cool" is magic these days? Apparently very—if we may believe [Cosmopolitan's recent piece](#) on the rising popularity of magicians on TikTok, in which our former member Nadav Roet shares his insights.

In other exciting news, our very own Danny appeared on *Fool Us*. If you haven't watched [his performance](#) yet, make sure you do—it's a beautiful piece of magic. You'll find the link and a full write-up inside this issue, along with Frans' review of *Now You See Me 3*.

All Mondays in January and February we'll be hosting our [Open Sessions](#). The first one is on January 5th at Mascini. Come by, meet fellow

magicians, exchange ideas, and talk magic—everyone is welcome.

Finally, we are proud to introduce the Society's new awards: The Buzzys. In the next issue you'll find the nominees; the winners will be announced in our April edition.

ENJOY READING

Fritz with a Z



greater financial need. We get a taste of this up front, watching Jesse Eisenberg's Daniel J. Atlas lead his band of magicians (also including Woody Harrelson, Dave Franco, and a returning Isla Fisher) through an elaborate and entertaining showcase of tricks ending with the same result. The only thing is, we're not actually watching the Horesman.

In an attempt to add some new blood into the series, we're actually seeing a trio of younger magicians played by Justice Smith, The Holdovers' Dominic Sessa, and Barbie's Arianna Greenblat. Having developed skills

REVIEW OF NOW YOU SEE ME 3: STILL TRICKY

Can you pull off the same trick three times in a row? Natural, with all of the sequels Hollywood constantly puts out, clearly there's a way to "repeat the magic," but the Now You See Me franchise, which literally involves magicians, is undoubtedly looking to continually throw new versions of sleight of hand at the audience, in hopes of constantly being able to breeze through nonsensical heist plots. In the case of Now You See Me: Now You Don't (the logical title of a first sequel, finally utilized this time around), perhaps enough time has passed for audiences not to really mind a lack of much change-up in this formula. Sure, the ensemble cast has some new players replacing old ones, and, if anything, the plotting has been streamlined in favor of making things far more cut-and-dry, but does this entry teach the veteran members involved any new tricks?

This film places us back in the world of the Four Horseman, famed Robin Hood-like magicians, who put on secret shows (that seem remarkably easy to find) filled with audience members who typically end up leaving with more money than they had, as they're part of an elaborate plan to rob some nefarious rich people of their wealth, and have it distributed back to those with far

of their own, the three are clearly competent enough for the real Atlas to surprise them at their hideout and recruit them for the film's main storyline. This would involve both the real Horseman and the recruits pulling off an elaborate scheme to steal the Hope Diamond from a corrupt South African business owner, Veronika Vanderberg, played by Rosamund Pike, who relishes the chance to be bad.



For a series built on heists, I've always had trouble enjoying this series more based on its narrative choices that revolve around minimizing the perspective of the actual horseman, in favor of the Federal agents chasing them. The first film gave us so much time with Mark Ruffalo's Agent Rhodes that its late-in-the-game twist felt pretty



ridiculous. Having to follow through on that the second time around, while still playing within the same narrative confines, meant once again feeling as though the plot structure was interfering with getting a better sense of

end up going to great lengths to put fantastical tricks on display that rely heavily on CG to remove any sense of grounded reality.

Basically, watching movie magic being presented as actual magic is not nearly the same as capturing what real magicians do on stage.

For example, the second film had a very fun set piece that relied on the audience following a card as it was passed among four people, without anyone else in a security room knowing what was going on. This film presents a similar scenario, rooted in character, as we simply watch each cast member show off their card-trick skills. That's all well and good until

It's Fast & Furious for Families

character dynamics. For what it's worth, there's a change up this time around 'Now You Don't' essentially drops the Feds and lets us focus mainly on our heroes. It makes sense, given how this film relies on comedic tension as we watch our old stalwarts deal with the young upstarts. Rather than focus on the Feds being told how impossible it is to get ahead of these magicians or watching them stumble their way from behind and attempt to play catch-up, there's much more amusement coming in the form of quips, tricks, and attitudes being used to have our lead characters show up one another, while building toward the grand plan.

Of course, there's also my other issue with a series that I do find entertaining in the moment, until I start thinking about any of the numerous ways in which the story doesn't make sense, and that's the depiction of magic. It's fun to see long takes involving sleight of hand magic or any number of card-based deceptions. Even fun, more elaborate ideas that can be done in reality are enjoyable for anyone who is a fan of magic shows. However, these movies never think that's enough and

the environment is suddenly manipulated in a way that only works with visual effects, taking away from the intended wonder. I can understand that being a movie means deploying larger-than-life tactics to make for an intense cinematic experience. Still, given the nature of magicians, it just bugged me to see what's clearly being faked blended with the art of illusion.



Gripes aside, much like the other two films, there's plenty to enjoy about this entry in the moment. While the lack of troublesome narrative complexity I found in the previous entries makes this film more streamlined, it also

means it's a more generic storyline. However, with an odd amount of relevance and a desire to see this villainous entity get taken down, it only really mattered so much. Though I do sort of wish I had less trouble seeing the clear signs of how some of the final reveals were going to go.



Making this all more palatable, of course, was the cast. Yes, Eisenberg is leaning harder than ever on crafting a truly irritating personality, despite being the de facto leader of the group. Part of that comes from his tough-love approach to the newbies; however, the film feels strangely lopsided when it comes to those three, as if plot points were cut from the final product that could have fleshed things out further. Whatever the case, the ensemble is solid.

Harrelson's specific style of acting allows him to have a lot of fun as a mentalist, while Franco has only grown as an actor since the first film and has brought his card-throwing abilities with him. Quite welcome is Fisher, who left after the film first, but has returned here with some fun references to the nature of being a female magician (leading to one of the funnier reveals later on in the film). Could I have also used more understanding of who she is, beyond being over-explained to by someone else? Yes, but at least the performer has the time to shine.

The new additions are also solid, each understanding that confidence is key to keeping up with everyone else, and attitude will only get them so far if they aren't also

willing to geek out about being with their magic idols. With each having a specialty and the whole ensemble getting their moments to shine, whether alone or paired up, a true highlight is seeing how this entry places proper focus on these magicians and what they are capable of, whether it's showtime or being involved in a chase of some kind.

Now You See Me: Now You Don't once again finds itself completely devoted to the idea that a secret society of magicians is pulling the strings, without any further explanation. The Eye has seemingly plenty to say, but this series is no closer to unlocking any additional details.

Whether or not the possible success of this 9-year-later sequel will allow director Rueben Fleischer, or whoever comes on board next, to finally bring out some new dimension to all of that secrecy, one can at least hope it comes with a good dose of fun that each of these films provides.



Still, while not quite overly impressive, the series has been given new life, enough fun tricks, and an involving story that may not hold much water, but is still enough to pull off a crowd-pleasing escape. I wish I appreciated some of the stakes more, but the characters barely do, so it's hard to take any of this more seriously. At the same time, the breeziness of it doesn't quite match something like the Ocean's series at its strongest, but I can at least enjoy the attempt to put all these people together and pull some kind of a fun feature out of its hat.

FRANS DE GROOT



AGENDA

December 1 [Jamm - Just another Magic Monday](#) Gorinchem (NL), Theater Peeriscoop

December 2 [Amsterdam Magic Show](#) - Boom Chicago, Amsterdam

December 8 [Amsterdam Magic Society Meeting \(Showcase\)](#), Mascini, Amsterdam

December 11 [Amsterdam Magic Bar show](#), Café De Buurvrouw

January 5 [JAMM](#) Gorinchem, Theater Peeriscoop

January 9 - 11 [The Session](#) - London Heathrow

January 11-14 - [East Coast Spirit Sessions 9](#), Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

January 11-13 - [Gator Gate Gathering](#), Orlando, Florida

January 12 [Amsterdam Magic Society](#) Mascini Amsterdam

January 18 [NMU NIEUWJAARSTREFFEN](#) Haventheater IJmuiden

January 23-25 - [MagiFest](#) in Columbus, Ohio

January 24-25 [Turkish Magic Festival](#) Istanbul

January 30 - February 1- [Kapital Konvention](#) Washington

February 2 [JAMM](#) Gorinchem, Theater Peeriscoop

February 5 -7 [MagicArt Fest](#) Buhusi, Romania





How a Franchise About Magicians Became a Surprise Smash Hit

It's one of those ideas that, once you hear it, you can't believe it hasn't been done a million times: A group of magicians use their tricks to pull off epic heists, transferring large sums from giant corporations back into the hands of the people. Or, as producer Bobby Cohen pitched the idea before the film was made: "Magic Robin Hood with a nice dollop of Ocean's Eleven." That's the principle behind *Now You See Me*, the 2013 movie starring Jesse Eisenberg, Woody Harrelson, Isla Fisher, and Dave Franco as the Four Horsemen, a group of heisting magicians. Directed by Louis Leterrier and written by Boaz Yakin and Ed Ricourt, the film blew away the box office, earning an impressive \$351.7 million on a \$75 million budget. The sequel from Jon M. Chu, 2016's *Now You See Me 2*, performed similarly well, taking in \$334.9 million. Now, nearly a decade after the second film, cinema's most unlikely blockbuster franchise is back with its third entry, the cleverly titled *Now You See Me*:

Now You Don't, in cinemas. And it's really, ridiculously fun.

How exactly did a movie about magicians, of all things, become a true Hollywood success story? Cohen and Ruben Fleischer, director of the latest installment, have some ideas.

Always reveal a magician's secrets, an original idea, and real tricks

The *Now You See Me* films also offer something unique in a crowded blockbuster space: movies based on an original idea. Of the top 10 movies at the 2025 box office, just one (*F1: The Movie*) is an original story. Expanding to the top 15, that number rises to three (Ryan Coogler's *Sinners* and *Final Destination: Bloodlines*, the sixth film in the horror franchise). Based on the previous films' earnings, *Now You See Me: Now You Don't* is likely to be the fourth.

"There aren't a lot of competing magic-based heist movies that I'm aware of," jokes Fleischer. Cohen agrees: "People love the fact that it wasn't based on a comic book or something else. When something feels truly original, that's a big thing."

Given how flashy the tricks are, it may surprise viewers to learn that the magic is all done on camera. "In movie one, the majority of the magic was in camera, real stuff. I think it's fair to say we let it get a little bit away from us in the second, falling into the desire to have a bigger sequel, bigger stunts," says Cohen. With Fleischer helming the third, it was paramount for both him and Cohen to ensure real magic was always the focus. "We built the spinning hallway, the room where the perspective is different, and that magic competition moment, where each magician is showing off, passing that baton to each other," recalls Cohen.



While Cohen helped originate the franchise, Fleischer was new to the fold, and upping the sense of realism was important to him. "There's a certain degree of objectivity in being an outsider, where I was able to approach this new one as a true fan and an audience member," he says. "Not to disparage the past ones, but a YouTube video I watched was asking the question, 'Are they magicians, or are they sorcerers?' They rated each of the tricks and sequences and whether or not a true magician could achieve them. So I wanted to make sure we didn't cross the threshold from magician into, you know, stopping rain."

Some early reviews have called out the film for being full of fake tricks, but Fleischer wants them to know they're wrong. "Everything's real, and it's all bona fide by real magicians."

Everything's completely legitimate. I'm not quite sure how that didn't come across," he says. "It's super important to me that upon second viewing, everything holds up, and you can't call bullshit.."



"The way that we use CG (computer graphics or computer-generated) in this movie is more as the finishing touch," says Cohen. "In other words, it's painting out a little bit of a wire. If Isla makes a diamond appear, she's doing the trick, but if there's a little bit of a string underneath it, or a little bit of something else. We're taking that out."

A genuine passion for illusion

As absurd as it may seem as the Horsemen pull off the unthinkable, Now You See Me remains grounded in actual magic. A big reason for that is Cohen and Fleischer's genuine passion for the art of magic and illusion.

"I used to think magic was just those crummy magicians at children's parties," says Fleischer. "But I've been to the Magic Castle in L.A., and when I got to see magic at an incredibly high level, I became very enamored. I really appreciate the experience of being made to feel like a little kid, as a cynical adult who doesn't have much joy in his life." One of the performers Fleischer was amazed by was Portuguese close-up magician Helder

Guimarães, who became a consultant for the film. Cohen, meanwhile, had loved magic ever since he was a kid. When he was 7, his grandfather took him to a magic convention on Long Island. He bought several of the tricks magicians were selling, took them home, and practiced them on his family.

But perhaps the biggest trick *Now You See Me* pulls off is making magicians look cool. “On the entertainment scale, magicians are kind of a notch below rodeo clown,” says Cohen. “So we had to find a way to get a team of magicians together and treat them as a rock band, rather than something old-fashioned. A big magic show is, by definition, theatrical. It’s a little bit silly. You’re submitting to being fooled. It’s about experiencing that sense of childlike awe.”



The latest film in the franchise captures the essence of the whole endeavor, built upon Fleischer’s ethos of fun, fun, fun. “I think that’s what comes across with the *Four Horsemen*,” says Cohen. “I think that the joy that the actors have doing it comes through the screen, and that becomes another, almost meta layer of enjoyment. That joy is the secret sauce.”

Which expert magicians helped with the film “Now you see me now you don’t”

The magic in *Now You See Me: Now You Don't* was developed with the help of several expert magicians and consultants, who also trained the cast members in sleight-of-hand and stage presence. Key expert magicians and consultants involved in the film include:

- Randy Pitchford: A "legacy magician" and the owner of the famed Los Angeles magicians' club the Magic Castle was brought on as a primary consultant for the third film. He and his team helped create the illusions that drive the story, including fully-built practical effects for the chateau set pieces.
- Ben Seidman: An expert magic coach who worked closely with the cast, particularly with the newcomers, teaching them various skills like pickpocketing and card manipulation.
- Handsome Jack: Another magic coach who assisted in training the actors on essential magic skills and performance techniques.
- Helder Guimarães: The Portuguese close-up magician was a consultant for the film, specifically contributing to the authenticity of the close-up magic.
- David Kwong: The head magic consultant for the first film and founder of the Misdirectors Guild, Kwong was involved in developing the initial film's story and ensuring the magic was grounded in real techniques, which set the standard for the franchise.
- Andrei Jikh and Blake Vogt: These close-up card experts were essential in training actors for the second and likely the third film in how to think like a "cardist" and perform complex card manipulation.
- Keith Barry: An Irish mentalist who was the Chief Magic and Mentalism Consultant for the second film, focusing on the mentalist aspects of the tricks.
- Bobby Cohen: A producer on all the films, and a former child magician himself, who helped ensure that the magic on screen was as real and practical as possible.
- Director Ruben Fleischer emphasized the use of real, bona fide magic principles for the third film to maintain authenticity and make the audience appreciate that "it's real magic" rather than relying on CG.

BARRY LEVITT &
FRANS DE GROOT

Dutch Magician Fools Penn and Teller with Impossible Rubber Band Magic



The Ultimate Test of Close-Up Magic

In the world of magic, there's no greater validation than fooling Penn & Teller on their hit show "Fool Us." But Dutch magician Danny Urbanus took this challenge to an entirely new level in Season 11, Episode 18, by performing his rubber band routine not from the safety of the stage, but mere inches away from Teller's expertly trained eyes. What unfolds is a masterclass in boldness, technical skill, and the kind of pure magical wonder that reminds us why we love the art of illusion.

Who Is Danny Urbanus?

Danny Urbanus isn't just another magician trying to make a name for himself. As a magic consultant for television shows in the Netherlands, he's built a reputation for extraordinary creativity and an almost supernatural ability to transform everyday objects into vessels of impossibility. His specialty lies in taking items we all recognize—things we handle daily without a second thought—and revealing their hidden potential for wonder.

What sets Urbanus apart is his understanding that the simplest props can create the most profound astonishment. While many modern magicians rely on elaborate stage setups, video screens, and complex apparatus, Urbanus proves that true magic doesn't require spectacle. Sometimes, all you need is a rubber band, a pen, and the courage to

perform your miracle right under the nose of someone who knows every trick in the book.

An Audacious Performance Strategy

The genius of Urbanus's performance lies not just in the technical execution of his rubber band manipulations, but in his strategic approach to the challenge. Rather than keeping a safe distance from Penn & Teller as most magicians do, he made the bold decision to involve Teller directly in the act. This wasn't just confidence—it was a calculated risk that paid off spectacularly. By inviting Teller to observe from the performer's perspective, Urbanus created a situation where one of magic's greatest minds was watching from mere inches away. Penn has often noted that Teller is "the brain of the operation," making this choice even more daring. The routine featured rubber bands visibly melting through one another, linking and unlinking in impossible ways, all while Teller scrutinized every finger movement, every angle, every potential method.

What makes this even more impressive is that Urbanus allowed Teller to keep the rubber bands afterward and examine them freely. This level of transparency is rare in magic and speaks to the purity of the technique. There were no trick props to hide, no secret switches to conceal—just pure skill and an innovative approach to a classic form of magic.

The Beauty of Rubber Band Magic

Rubber band magic often gets overlooked in favor of flashier card tricks or grand stage illusions. Yet as Urbanus demonstrates, rubber bands possess unique magical qualities. They're familiar, mundane objects that everyone understands. We know they're solid, we know how they behave, and

we know they can't pass through one another. This makes it all the more astounding when they appear to do exactly that.

The elasticity and movement of rubber bands create a visual flow that can disguise even the most complex maneuvers. In Urbanus's hands, these simple loops become dancing impossibilities, challenging our understanding of physical reality. The fact that he can execute these moves while Teller watches from close range elevates the difficulty exponentially.

Penn & Teller's Response

Perhaps the most telling indicator of Urbanus's success was Teller's reaction throughout the performance. Known for his silent stage persona and analytical mind, Teller's face told the whole story. His expressions shifted from professional curiosity to genuine wonder, and by the end, he wore the delighted smile of a child witnessing magic for the first time. This transformation—from expert analyst to amazed spectator—represents the highest compliment one magician can give another.

Penn's assessment was equally enthusiastic, calling it a "perfect magic routine." Coming from someone who has seen thousands of magic acts and knows the inner workings of

countless tricks, this praise carries significant weight.

Why This Performance Matters

Danny Urbanus's appearance on "Fool Us" reminds us that magic, at its core, isn't about fooling people—it's about creating moments of wonder. By stripping away all pretense and performing with nothing but the simplest of props, he proved that creativity and skill will always triumph over complexity. His performance serves as inspiration for magicians everywhere and pure entertainment for those of us who simply love to be amazed.

FLIXXY.COM



Click on the picture above to see Danny's performance

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