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Funny Videos

Funny Videos

# Ferrell: Everyone Knows A Ron Burgundy

BY JOHN ANDERSON © 2013, Newsday

NEW YORK — The time: a rainy weekday afternoon. Setting: the book-lined, wainscoted drawing room of an upscale downtown hotel. The fireplace softly sputters. The wait-staff quietly bustles. The guests engage in muted conversation, nestled in leather armchairs. One of those chairs contains Will Ferrell. He is not playing the cow-

So far, so good. Ferrell, creator of some of contemporary comedy's more indelible characters, has not shown up as any of them. Not race driver Ricky Bobby ("Talladega Nights"), not Chazz Michael Michaels ("Blades of Glory"), not Jackie Moon ("Semi-Pro"), not Brennan Huff ("Step Brothers"). Not the cowbell-banging member of Blue Oyster Cult from "Saturday Night Live." Not George W. Bush ("You're Welcome, America") or Abraham Lincoln ("Drunk History"). Not even the seasonally appropriate Buddy the Elf ("Elf").

Most surprisingly: not the legendary Ron Burgundy — bombastic newscaster, mustachioed narcissist and the centerpiece of "Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues" (which opened Wednesday). Ferrell's been playing him for months, after all — on "Conan," in car ads, at a curling competition in Canada, even a local newscast in Bismarck, N.D. You half expect the clueless newsman to be sitting here, playing cheesy jazz flute and ordering pee-no-nwarr.

"Oh, you don't want to talk to Ron Burgundy," the soft-spoken Ferrell laughs — the message being, "How much does Ron possibly have to say?"

Well, he speaks to a largeenough constituency of the American moviegoing public to make "Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues" — the long-awaited sequel to the cult-fave "Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy" (2004) one of the more anticipated releases in a season traditionally devoted to highbrow, lofty-minded Oscar bait that clocks in at around, oh, 2 hours and 59 minutes. At under two hours, "Anchorman 2" has a lot more jokes than "12 Years a Slave." But it took almost 10 years to make.

Why? "How do I say this diplomatically?" Ferrell asks, preparing to be undiplomatic. "They (Paramount Pictures) were cool to not going beyond a certain budget level, which was ridiculously low.



GEMMA LAMANA/PARAMOUNT PICTURES/MCT

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Will Ferrell, left, and Steve Carell star in "Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues."

They were running their numbers based on the box-office success of the first one, and not taking into account how much it's grown in popularity and where all of us are now, professionally speaking. And we were, like, 'Uhhhhh, I don't think we can do it for that number.'

Obviously, the concerned parties found "common ground" and the legend was allowed to continue: Ron, now married to his onetime rival Veronica Corningstone (Christina Applegate), has come to New York — where he's promptly fired, and Veronica is made the first female anchorperson of a major network. The year is 1980, however, and the birth of 24-hour news is providing opportunity for all manner of inept newspersons. Invited to join an operation clearly modeled on the original CNN, Ron decides to reunite his old San Diego crew — sportscaster Champ Kind (David Koechner), field reporter Brian Fantana (Paul Rudd) and demented meteorologist Brick Tamland (Steve Carell) — and reinvent the news. Hilarity — subtle and inane —

ensues, but so does a certain satirical take on the media.

"Obviously, we just wanted to make a funny movie first and foremost," Ferrell said. "But once you decide to do 1980 and 24-hour news, you kind of have to comment on what's become commonplace. And it made us laugh that Ron Burgundy and these guys would be the forefathers of what we now expect to see on TV news. 'Oh, he's the one who thought it all up.' And that made us laugh."

One of the "innovations" is now a staple of Los Angeles local news — the high-speed car chase.

"In one of the focus groups we had, when we tested the movie, it was fascinating because all they talked about was the news part of what the movie was talking about," he said. "They'd say, 'I didn't realize there was a time before highspeed car chases were part of the news' and that was kind of really satisfying. We said, 'I think we're on to something."

The "we" were Ferrell and director Adam McKay, who has worked with the actor-comedian on the original "Anchorman," "Step Broth-"Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby" and co-wrote "Anchorman 2" with its star. The idea that there's a script might dismay some viewers: Someone actually wrote those jokes?

"That's the question we get all the time," he said. "How much is improvised and how much is written. There's no strict ratio — if we went and watched the movie, I could show you: One scene is improvised and another isn't, and the

half of the next is or isn't. We improvise on every scene and see what happens, but even the written stuff is improvised, because Adam and I are improvising as we write

What's great about Ron Burgundy, Ferrell said, is that everybody thinks he knows who

Burgundy is. Literally, as the movie grew, Adam and I would run across people, and it didn't matter what part of the country, someone would say they knew a guy like that," Ferrell said. "'Let me ask you: You know a guy named Craig Gerber? He was in Terre Haute, Indiana, for years? He had a mustache? Was it based on him?' And we'd say, 'We have no idea what you're talking about.'

One day on the street in Beverly Hills, Ferrell said, he ran across an ex-L.A. newscaster named Harold Greene. "He used to work in San Diego for a bit, then L.A.," he said. "I run into him one day and he says, 'Will Ferrell?' And I say, 'Yeah! Harold Greene?!' He's totally flattered I knew who he was. 'Nice to meet you,' he says. 'You know, I used to have a mustache. ...' I said 'Yeah, I know who you are.' He says, 'I gotta ask you - was that movie based on me?'

"I started laughing and said, 'No, I'm sorry.' And he says, 'There's an old saying in the news game: 'Yeah,

right....' And he turns and walks away. He was totally convinced it

#### FAUX NEWSMAN A GOOD **REAL-LIFE PITCHMAN**

Where there's a Will — in this case, Ferrell — there's a way to sell anything. In a marketing blitz of massive proportions, the "Anchorman 2" star has been showing up as his screen incarnation Ron Burgundy in everything from Dodge commercials to the January cover of *Dog Fancy* magazine. While he's selling people on the movie, he's

#### also been selling these products. WOULD YOU BUY A NEW CAR FROM THIS MAN?

Since last month, Chrysler has been getting plenty of mileage out of using Burgundy in ads for the 2014 Dodge Durango. According to Bloomberg BusinessWeek, sales of all Chryslers have increased 11 percent since the ads started running, and Durango sales have gotten revved up by 59 percent.

## THE SCOOP ON ICE CREAM:

The cherry on all this marketing mayhem rests on Ben & Jerry's latest flavor called, not surprisingly, Scotchy Scotch Scotch. Despite its name, this G-rated sweet treat is actually butterscotch ice cream with butterscotch swirls.

## A SHOT OF SCOTCH:

Burgundy loves his "Scotchy scotch scotch." So, in keeping with that spirit, Riviera Imports has concocted its own edition of Ron Burgundy's favorite libation called Great Odin's Raven Special Reserve. It's being touted as a "40 percent ABV (alcohol by volume) blend of Scotch whiskies from Speyside, Highlands and Islay (it also boasts some nice fruity overtones).

## **NÉWS BRIEFS:**

Jockey is getting in on the action with a line of Ron Burgundy low-rise briefs, available in Zeus blue or panther red. The packaging features Burgundy running his hand through his hair with the tagline "Don't act like you're not impressed.'

## **BOOK IT, RONNO:**

"Let Me Off at the Top: My Classy Life & Other Musings' (Crown/Archetype), Burgundy's autobiography," purports to tell the news anchor's story, from his childhood in Haggleworth, Iowa, to his experiences with women. The mustachioed Burgundy adorns the cover along with this bit of self-endorsement: "I wrote a hell of a book!"

— Daniel Bubbeo