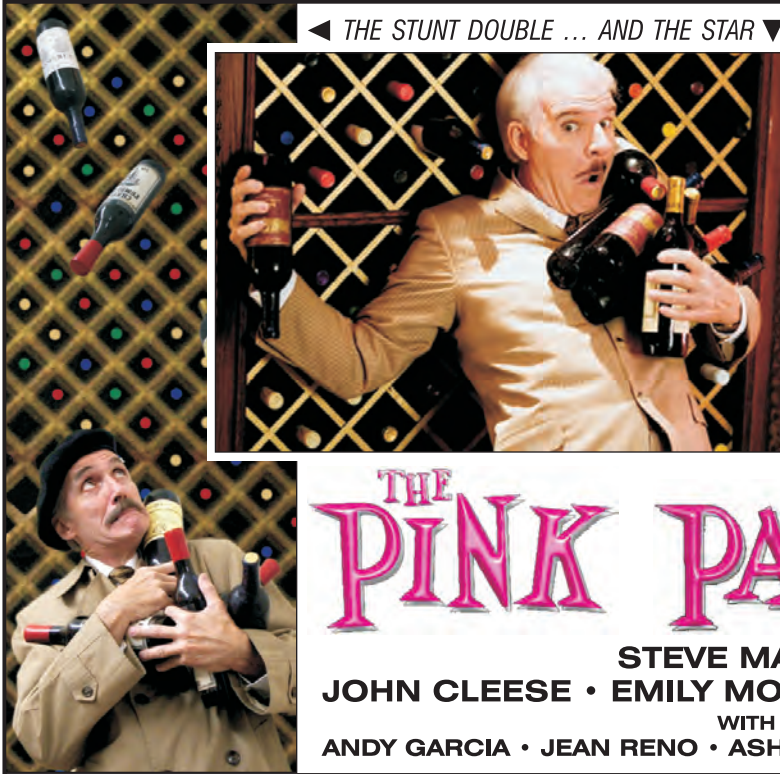


*They're panning the movie, but ...*  
**The Critics are Raving About the Juggling Scene!**

- "A mammoth juggling exhibition." – New York Times
- "Absolute mirth ... an elaborate juggling act." – Washington Post
- "A deft Chaplinesque sequence." – Toronto Globe & Mail
- "Sight gags that border on inspired." – Associated Press
- "A killer piece of physical comedy." – Buffalo News
- "A brilliantly-staged scene." – The Aisle Seat
- "Worth the price of admission on its own." – Detroit News
- "A graceful bit with classic undertones." – Film Journal International
- "Terrific physical comedy – funny, deft, visually alive – like an oasis in the desert of knuckleheadedness." – Philadelphia Inquirer

◀ THE STUNT DOUBLE ... AND THE STAR ▼



Compiled from the Variety Arts Gazette, 2009 & 2010

## Hollywood Follies: The final word on Pink Panther 2

*The Pink Panther 2*, the MGM/Columbia Studios big-budget comedy starring Steve Martin as the bumbling Inspector Clouseau, opened in U.S. theatres February 6, 2009. Since then, here is the concise report: Within a month, the movie was panned by critics around the world as a colossal waste of a great cast. By June the DVDs were in the bargain bins.

To bring everyone up-to-date, in the fall of 2007 I was engaged by *Pink Panther 2* as prop

consultant, coordinator of a team of juggling waiters, and juggling stunt double for Steve Martin. The focus of our team was a wild restaurant scene in which wine bottles fly about in a comedy of errors.

It was a pleasure to work with Steve Martin and coach him through moves he was able to do himself on-camera. It was also great fun to work with stunt coordinator Ernie Orsatti, a legend among stuntmen. And as a physical comic, it was a distinction just to be *listed* on the same project with John Cleese. Most cherished was the bond forged among our team, the *La Plata de Nada* jugglers: Milan De Vries, Benjamin Elfant, Joel Harris, Yan Imbault, Jenny the Juggler, Stephen King, Andy Lintz, and Barry Rosenberg.

The producers, despite engaging world-class juggling talent, decided at the 11th hour that there should be no *discernable* juggling expertise in the film. Instead of the synchronized patterns they wanted at first, our deadline challenge would be to devise "creative fumbling" and "inspired chaos" with the wine bottles. So our team of elite jugglers – most of us at one time or another with international all-star circuses – was actually being paid *not* to juggle, a state-of-affairs that will be good for shared belly-laughs for decades. Oh well, that's the warped world of Hollywood.

In advance of release, my wish was that movie critics acknowledge the craft of physical comedy without looking for high art. This was not to be. The reviews were eviscerating – worldwide.

But in a bizarre twist, a surprising number of movie critics, desperate to make *some* kind of positive comment, praised the chaotic wine-bottle juggling scene as the best part of the movie! A few glowing samples: "A deft Chaplinesque sequence," "A graceful bit with classic undertones," "Sight gags that border on inspired."

This resulted in an unexpected wave of publicity – several newspaper feature articles, an opening night event & party, a feature on the Comedy Central web site, and even one speaking engagement. Steve Martin himself – a class act – made sure to credit the fine work of our juggling team in press interviews, even as he was dodging heavy criticism for the movie.

My favorite quotation was from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, which in my view gave an accurate appraisal of our scene: "Terrific physical comedy – funny, deft, visually alive – like an oasis in the desert of knuckleheadedness."

Unless Hollywood needs a "mature" juggler, the *Pink Panther 2* very likely wraps up my once-a-decade movie-making since the 1970s. A notable irony is that my income from this last motion picture – the very medium which eclipsed vaudeville in the 1930s – in large part financed the new museum presentation and exhibition, *A Vaudeville Retrospective*. ■



Above is the juggling team assembled for *The Pink Panther 2*'s riotous restaurant scene. Back row, from left: Andy Lintz, Jenny the Juggler, Benjamin Elfant, Emily Mortimer, Steve Martin, Steve's stunt double & coach R.W. Bacon, Milan De Vries, & Yan Imbault. Front row: Stephen King & Barry Rosenberg. (Not present: Joel Harris)

