

## Blu-Ray Review: 'Edge of Darkness' Illuminates Mel Gibson's Inner Demons

Submitted by [mattmoviemann](#) [1] on May 12, 2010 - 1:55pm

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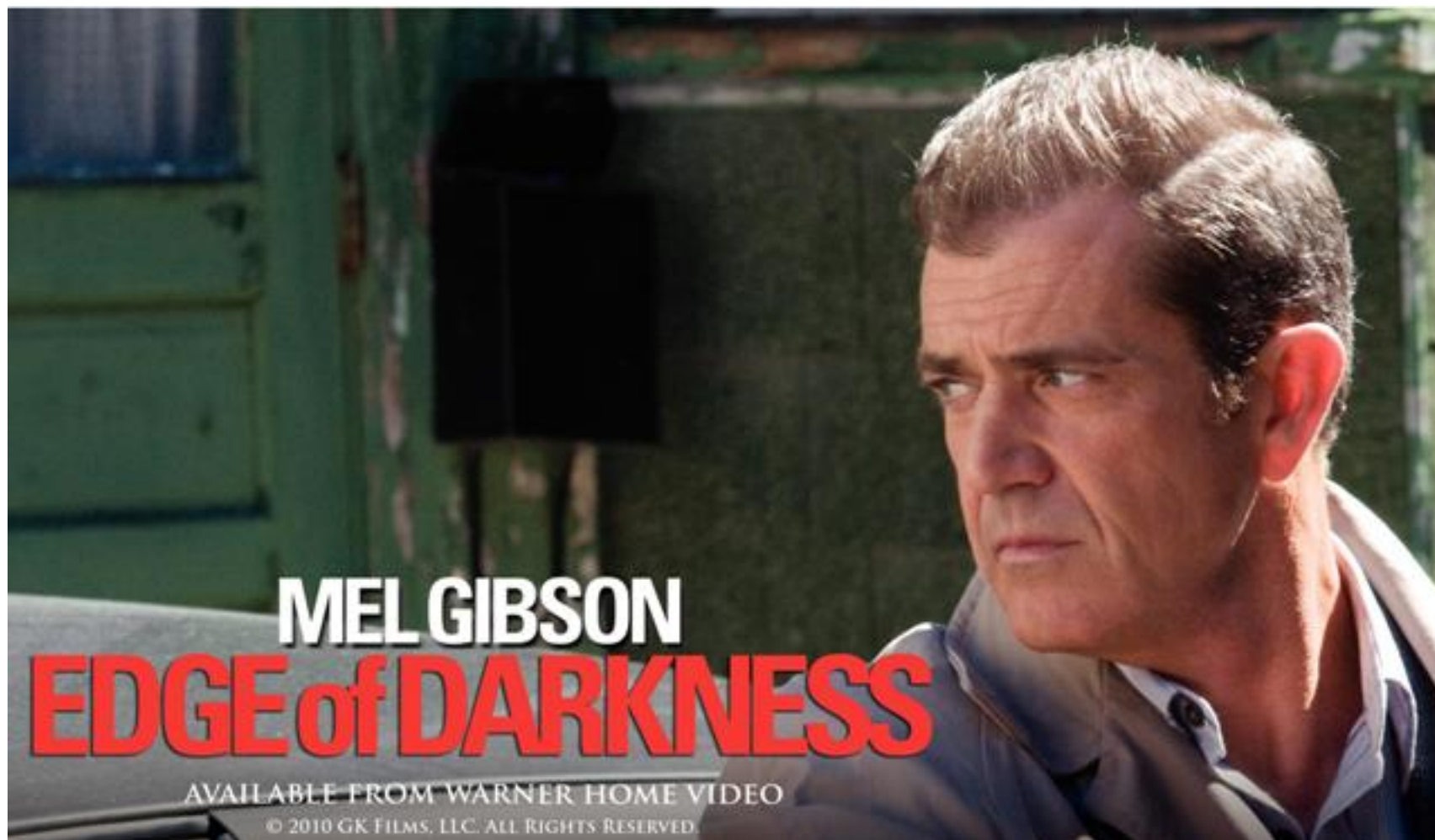
CHICAGO – When WGN-TV's Dean Richards asked Mel Gibson whether he believes the public will perceive him in a different light after "all that's been in the news" about him, the "Edge of Darkness" star answered by calling Richards an "a—hole." This amusing interview-turned-Internet sensation once again proved that Gibson clearly has issues.

Yet like many similarly troubled and personally flawed artists, from Woody Allen to Roman Polanski, Gibson's inner demons have actually enhanced his work rather than detracted from it. His four directorial efforts, stretching all the way back to 1993's "The Man Without a Face," are all blatantly colored by Gibson's deep-seated masochism. "Passion of the Christ" is as much an act of self-flagellation as it is a blood-drenched tribute to Jesus's sacrifice. It certainly wasn't a throwaway decision by Gibson to cast himself as the hands that crucify Christ. In "Edge of Darkness," Gibson's self-reflexivity threatens to spiral into self-parody when he utters the trailer-ready line, "You had better decide whether you're hangin' on the cross or bangin' in the nails."



Blu-Ray Rating: **3.5/5.0**

"Darkness" marks Gibson's return to acting after a seven-year absence, and it's a far cry from his last major screen role as the cuddly farmer in "Signs." The lines in his face are more deeply etched, and his persona has been stripped of all lighthearted charm or self-aware smirks. This is Gibson at his most raw and fiery, and though his performance is not entirely successful, it is highly entertaining, and the driving force behind director Martin Campbell's surprisingly compelling drama. It's a loose, somewhat cluttered adaptation of Campbell's 1985 BBC miniseries, taking what was essentially a political thriller, and turning it into a character-driven hodgepodge of "Death Wish" and "Silkwood." Gibson plays Boston detective Thomas Craven, a tormented man with nothing to lose, save for his ever-shortening breath. Craven is on the look-out for the killer of his daughter (Bojana Novakovic), a would-be whistleblower whose attempts to expose the corruption at a nuclear research facility ended up costing her life.

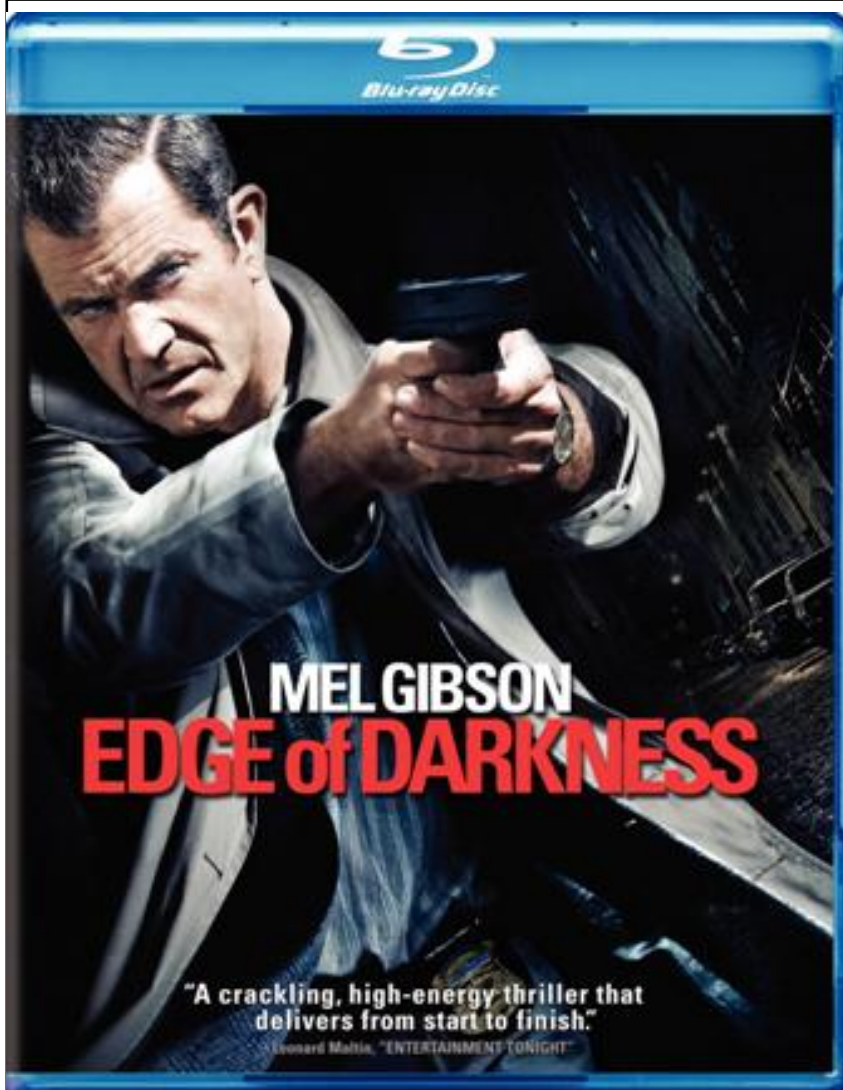


Mel Gibson stars in Martin Campbell's Edge of Darkness.

Photo credit: Warner Home Video

The film's weakest asset is its screenplay co-authored by William Monahan and Andrew Bovell. It strains to tell two stories at once (the whodunit mystery crossed with the political conspiracy), and ends up merely paying lip-service to both. It's often difficult to follow the film's murky plot, which isn't aided by lines such as, "It is never what it is. It is what it can be made to look like." The script also has a bad habit of making characters say lines just so they can be uttered meaningfully later in the film (this is when dialogue skates dangerously on the edge of becoming manufactured catchphrases). None of the actors' Boston "ah-ccents" are all that convincing (least of all Gibson's), but the sheer quality of the acting and direction ultimately compensates for the film's flaws.

Campbell masterfully creates an atmosphere of menace in which sinister forces seem to lurk just beyond the frame, and he wisely limits the film's action to isolated bursts of sudden violence that produce a real jolt. A particularly tense encounter between Thomas and his daughter's jittery friend Melissa (played in a riveting cameo by Caterina Scorsone) ends in a way I should've seen coming, if it weren't for Campbell's impeccable sense of timing. Gibson has several moments of effective emoting, but the film is easily stolen by Ray Winstone as agent Jedburgh, whose job is to clean up evidence of corruption, while preventing the public from "connecting A to B." He exudes a quietly commanding gravitas worthy of Anthony Hopkins, and his final scene is utter perfection.



Edge of Darkness was released on Blu-Ray and DVD on May 11th, 2010.

*Photo credit: Warner Home Video*

"Edge of Darkness" is presented in 1080p High Definition (with a 2.4:1 aspect ratio), accompanied by English, French and Spanish audio tracks, and includes a DVD and digital copy of the film. Among the forgettable five minutes of deleted scenes are an alternate encounter between Gibson and the predictably evil Danny Huston (much less violent than the one used in the film), and a golf trip between Winstone and a spectacled villain in which they recite more repetitious dialogue about "autonomous security" (this script occasionally sounds like a broken record).

The exclusive Blu-Ray content labeled "Focus-Point Featurettes" are merely the same type of standard making-of vignettes that used to be offered in DVD releases. Running a total of thirty minutes, these featurettes are all super-brisk gush-fests with silly names like "Making a Ghost Character Real," yet some of them do possess a few interesting tidbits. Gibson discusses the challenge of reigning himself in to play an introverted, often restrained character, and admits that "stillness is a stranger" to him. He says that the plot reminded him of a 17th century Jacobean tragedy that eventually culminates in a bloodbath, and he mentions a cut scene in which Thomas paid for his own funeral (further illustrating how the film is a perfect fit for Gibson's death-obsessed psyche). There's some grainy footage of Campbell's original miniseries, which focused more intently on issues concerning plutonium and the Middle East. While the filmmakers insist that this remake is a "thinking man's thriller," the movie's intellectual substance is often ignored in favor of visceral suspense. Since Bovell's initial script was merely a condensed version of the miniseries, Monahan was brought in to update the picture, setting it in his familiar "Departed" locale of Boston (rather than Britain), and centering the plot on characters rather than politics, though he says that the true villain of his story is "our deniability culture."

*'Edge of Darkness' is released by Warner Home Video and stars Mel Gibson, Ray Winstone, Danny Huston, Bojana Novakovic, Shawn Roberts, David Aaron Baker, Denis O'Hare and Jay O. Sanders. It was written by William Monahan and Andrew Bovell and directed by Martin Campbell. It was released on May 11th, 2010. It is rated R.*

By [MATT FAGERHOLM](#) [14]

Staff Writer

HollywoodChicago.com



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