

## Blu-Ray Review: John Carpenter's Incredible 'Escape From New York'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on August 10, 2010 - 9:46am

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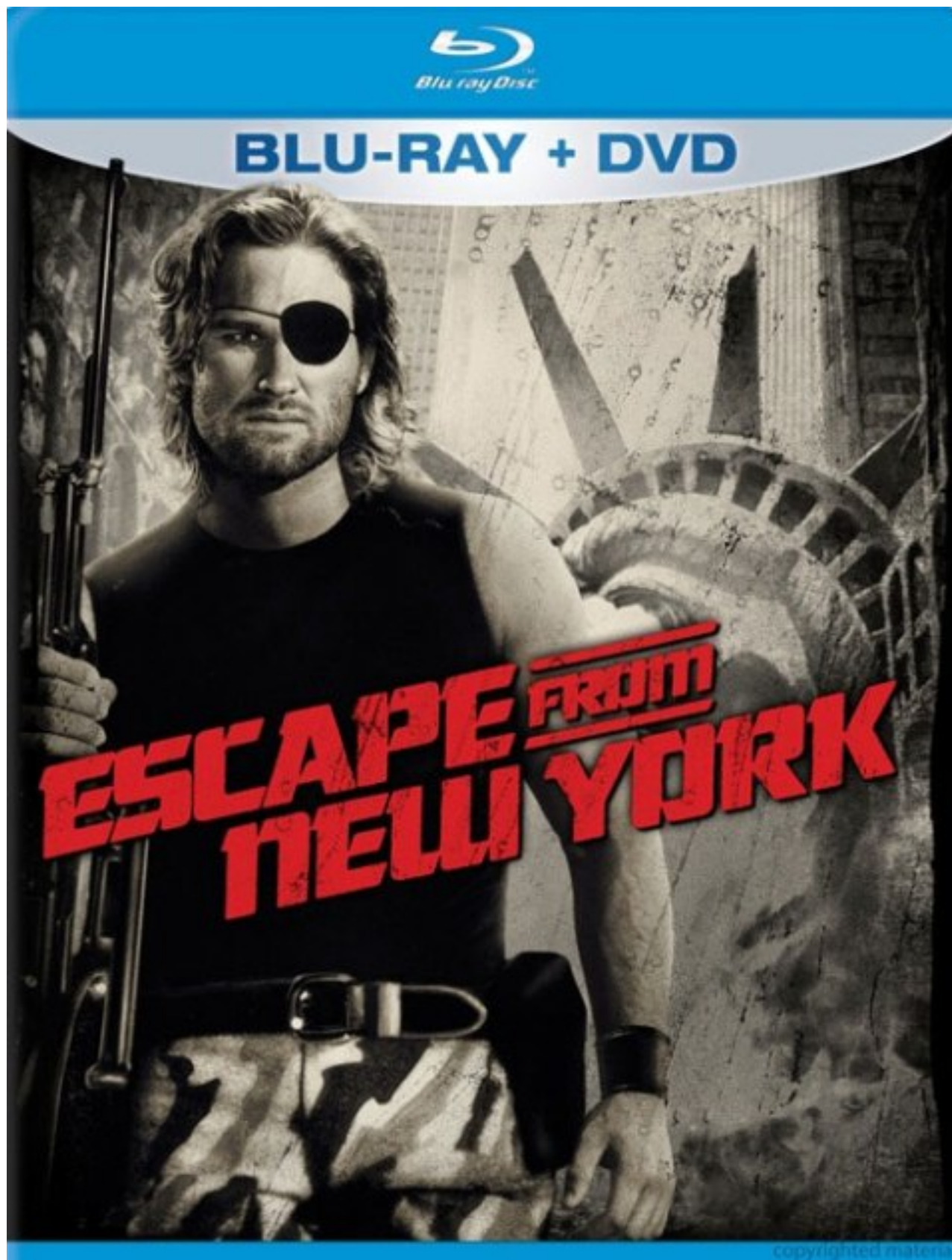
CHICAGO – Our younger readers may find it hard to believe that John Carpenter was once one of the most inspiring filmmakers in the world. He's still one of the truly influential voices of the '70s and '80s despite the tragedy that has been his career for the last couple decades. Save for the occasional flare-up ("Masters of Horror: Cigarette Burns," "In the Mouth of Madness"), Carpenter's work has barely resembled his prime. For proof, check out the still-amazing and timeless "Escape From New York," now available on Blu-ray for the first time.



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

"Escape From New York" fell right in the middle of an amazing period of Carpenter creativity that began with "Assault on Precinct 13" in 1976 and closed with "They Live" in 1988. With his most common and successful leading man in Kurt Russell (who would also star in the director's "The Thing" and "Big Trouble in Little China"), Carpenter brilliantly distilled classic filmmaking structures with his own modern style. Carpenter's best films are almost all heavily inspired by older ones (mostly Westerns) but they also feel ahead of their time. It's that incredible blend of the familiar and the brand new that's so entertaining.

Russell plays the legendary Snake Plissken, a former war hero who has been forced into a deadly rescue mission. In the future, the island of Manhattan has been turned into a high-security prison and the President of the United States (Donald Pleasance) has crash-landed inside. Only Snake can go in and save the leader of the free world from its deadliest city. Oh, and Snake has 24 hours to complete his mission or an explosive charge will go off inside his body.



Escape From New York was released on Blu-ray on August 3rd, 2010

Photo credit: Fox Home Entertainment

After the relatively small scales of "Precinct 13," "Halloween," and "The Fog," something as massive as "Escape From New York" must have been daunting for Carpenter but the film works in every single way. And it's held up remarkably well. It doesn't hurt that Fox's new Blu-ray release looks and sounds great. I'm very happy to report that the video has not been overly polished, as so often happens with films from this era. The grit and grime of "Escape From New York" don't look too plastic. In fact, the film looks even darker and dirtier than I remembered but in a way that seems more in line with how it originally looked on its release. Like a lot of people, I grew up watching Carpenter films on VHS and cable. I've never seen "Escape From New York" quite like this. It's a great transfer and anyone out there thinking of remastering an early-'80s film should take a look to see how it's done.

Sadly, Fox didn't take the time for a SINGLE special feature. No one is willing to talk about "Escape From New York"? None of the cast, crew, or countless filmmakers inspired by it? Lame. We're almost at the 30th anniversary of this '80s classic and I can't believe that they couldn't scrape together one retrospective featurette or commentary track. Call ANYONE in the film industry who's making sci-fi or action movies and they'd probably have something to say about how "Escape From New York" influenced them. It just displays a lack of effort.

Ultimately, "Escape From New York" on Blu-ray looks and sounds great and plays even better than you remember but the release only gets a barely-passing grade because Snake deserved more than this bare-bones disc. Time has been so kind to Carpenter's film that maybe he'll get it in another 30 years.

*'Escape From New York' stars Kurt Russell, Lee Van Cleef, Ernest Borgnine, Donald Pleasance, Isaac Hayes, Season Hubley, Harry Dean Stanton, and Adrienne Barbeau. It was written by John Carpenter & Nick Castle and directed by Carpenter. It was released on Blu-ray/DVD combo pack on August 3rd, 2010 and is rated R. It runs 99 minutes.*

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