

Blu-Ray Review: Cult of ‘Donnie Darko’ Extends to Two-Disc Director’s Cut

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on February 11, 2009 - 6:53pm

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CHICAGO – Most movies come and go. Even some of the most critically and commercially acclaimed films of the last few years have essentially been forgotten already. I knew [Richard Kelly](#) [14]’s “[Donnie Darko](#) [4]” was a film that was not going to go away quickly the first time I saw it and the Blu-Ray “Director’s Cut” simply extends the shelf life of this riveting cult classic.

Where does one even begin in recapping “Donnie Darko”? It’s kind of a psychological thriller with time travel and some pretty funny ’80s material. It’s like a [John Hughes](#) [16] movie meets “[The Matrix](#) [17]” interpreted by [David Lynch](#) [18]. And that only begins to capture the mesmerizing weirdness of one of the hardest to forget movies of the ’00s.



Donnie Darko: Director's Cut
Photo credit: Fox

[Jake Gyllenhaal](#) [8] stars as the lead in “Donnie Darko” with [Drew Barrymore](#) [19], [Noah Wyle](#) [20], [Jena Malone](#) [9], [Patrick Swayze](#) [13], [Maggie Gyllenhaal](#) [11], and [Mary McDonnell](#) [12] filling out the all-star cast. Donnie is an average high school student who starts having end-of-the-world visions and sees a man in a terrifying bunny costume named Frank who tells him that the world is going to end in just over 28 days.



Donnie Darko: Director's Cut
Photo credit: Fox

Going deeper into the plot or interpretations would be futile. "Donnie Darko" is a movie that means different things to different viewers. For me, it's more of a mood piece, a dream, than something that should be interpreted literally and that's what has given the film surprising staying power and a growing cult following in the eight years since its release.

One very notable thing about "Donnie Darko" is that the film has a markedly different "Director's Cut" that runs twenty minutes longer than the theatrical version and actually answers a lot more questions than the original version. Some fans prefer the original version and Fox wisely includes both on the film's Blu-Ray release, giving both the HD treatment.

The theatrical version of "Donnie Darko" includes a commentary by the cast and crew and one with Richard Kelly and Jake Gyllenhaal. When the "Director's Cut" was put together in 2004, Kelly actually got friend Kevin Smith to stop by for an audio track and it's still one of my favorites in the history of DVD. Smith acts more as an interviewer, prodding Kelly along to talk about the movie. It's great and a must-listen for anyone who likes commentaries.

The second disc of "Donnie Darko" on Blu-Ray includes the supplemental material, starting with a nearly hour-long production diary about the making of the film which includes a pretty dull commentary from cinematographer Stephen Poster. A commentary on a production diary is the definition of DVD overkill.

There's a featurette called "They Made Me Do It Too - The Cult of Donnie Darko" which is essentially a "Darko" fanboy interview piece. The ultimate fanboy, Daryl Donaldson, winner of a "Donnie Darko" obsessiveness contest, is spotlighted in "#1 Fan: A Darkomentary". The second disc is rounded out by a storyboard-to-screen comparison and the film's trailer.

As for the film(s) themselves, the transfer of both versions of "Donnie Darko" is a little lackluster. The HD image isn't as vibrant as it should be and doesn't seem nearly as remastered as it would have been in another studio's hands. The transfer simply doesn't have the level of detail I expected. The audio is better with the English 5.1 DTS-HD Master Audio being the best track yet produced for Mr. Darko and his friends, both real and imaginary.

"Donnie Darko" was almost never released in theaters and didn't even break even on its initial run. And yet it has a shelf life unlike practically any other film released in 2001. Even though the transfer could have been a little better, the excellent supplemental material combined with the quality of Kelly's film itself makes "Donnie Darko" a great addition to any Blu-Ray collector's catalog.

'Donnie Darko: Director's Cut' is released by Fox Home Entertainment and stars Jake Gyllenhaal, Jena Malone, Drew Barrymore, Patrick Swayze, Noah Wyle, James Duval, and Maggie Gyllenhaal. It was written and directed by Richard Kelly. It was released on February 10th, 2009.



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