

Life's a Grind For Nicolas Cage in 'Drive Angry 3D'

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on February 25, 2011 - 4:13pm

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Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Muscle cars, kick-ass dudes and foxy ladies have been staples of the grindhouse since Detroit had a pulse. Nicolas Cage joins that parade in the over-the-top road picture called “Drive Angry 3D,” lest we mistake it for the 2nd dimension.

This is an audacious looking film, filmed in true 3D technology as a eye-popping, gun-shooting, blow-up-real-good carnival ride. The infamous Nicolas Cage seems destined to be the centerpiece of all this, but he prefers a low keyed approach to his bad ass driver, which is one of the lost connections in this by-the-book epic.

Nicolas Cage is John Milton, a mysterious man in a Buick Riviera. He is on the run away or towards something, but loses the car in the escape. He meets a fired waitress named Piper (Amber Heard) who happens to have the keys to her soon-to-be-ex-boyfriend's Dodge Charger. Together they begin to pursue Milton's granddaughter, who was stolen from his murdered daughter at the time of her birth.

There is a hitch in the form of 'The Accountant' (William Fichtner), who is pursuing Milton himself, and creates havoc along the trail. Oh yes, and the man who stole Milton's granddaughter is Jonah King (Billy Burke) who runs a Satan-worshipping cult that relies on human sacrifice. It becomes apparent that Milton has a score to settle with King, and that pursuit provides the tension that needs to be broken.



Man on the Run: David Morse (Webster) helps out Nicolas Cage (Milton) in 'Drive Angry 3D'
Photo Credit: Ron Batzdorf for © Summit Entertainment

Luckily, Milton has an ally in Webster (the always welcome David Morse), a mechanic who fixes muscle cars and has a few to lend of his own. The holy trio of Detroit – the Riviera, the Charger and the Chevelle – transport Piper and Milton along the way to the final confrontation with

both The Accountant and Jonah King. The emergent souls from such a confrontation will determine the end of the road.

There are substantial action sequences, chases and quality kills in this grindhouse homage. The term “grindhouse” was recently popularized by Quentin Tarantino and used to describe the crapbox ‘B’ movies of the 1970s that featured blood, cars and sometimes naked women. There is an over-romanticizing of the era going on, and Drive Angry is a perfect example of this. There can be all the elements of the former g-house movies, but the times that made them and perpetuated them cannot be organically brought back. This is a calculating narrative used as a marketing tool, right down to the extra four bucks the audience will shell out to see it.

It is fairly worth it, however. The 3D is based on actual filming it that way, and showcases itself as superior eye candy. And speaking of eye candy, the women are righteously on display in deference to the grindhouse roots, but also gets their kick-assery moments in the form of Amber Heard, who relishes the role and takes no prisoners. There is quite the post feminist use of co-mingling with a comeuppance for the pig boyfriend and an unusual gunfight/love making sequence that has to seen to be appreciated.

The film begs the question, ‘what has happened to the crazy Nic Cage?’ He’s chooses a Eastwood-like tough guy, all mystery and mumbled line readings. It would have been better with the over-oriented, funky accent Cage, perhaps a combination of “Wild at Heart” and “Raising Arizona.” There is a sense of him going through the motions, and the result is somewhat bland.

The supporting cast is literally going along for the ride and has some fun along the way. The angular-faced stoicism of William Fichtner is perfect for his representative role as The Accountant, he maintains the chilling energy throughout. Billy Burke (I wonder if he knows there’s an old-timey movie star with the [same name?](#) [13]) needed to turn up the volume a bit, but gets his just desserts spectacularly. David Morse is the veteran that wraps his steadiness around every character role, and is always appreciated.



Wild Thing: Amber Heard (Piper) Rides Shotgun in 'Drive Angry 3D'
Photo Credit: Ron Batzdorf for © Summit Entertainment

There are several nice tributes along the way. Tarantino gets his due as the resurrector of the grindhouse genre, there is also a direct nod to the classic spew of “Race with the Devil” (1975) and the name John Milton recalls the creator of the poem “Paradise Lost.” The narrative of Drive Angry could use a little more heart in evoking these superior efforts, but what is there has the organ in the right place.

And this is perfect anti-Oscar fuel. While other film buffs are stuffing themselves with “Winter’s Bone,” in anticipation of Sunday’s Big Event, you could be driving a stolen car with the original man-on-fire, Nicolas Cage. Acceptance speech optional.

“Drive Angry 3D” opens everywhere February 25th, 2011. Featuring Nicolas Cage, Amber Heard, William Fichtner, Billy Burke and David Morse. Screenplay by Todd Farmer and Patrick Lussier, directed by Patrick Lussier. Rated “R”



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