

'The Raid 2' is Must-See for Martial Arts Action Fans

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on April 4, 2014 - 8:37pm

- [Alex Abbad](#) [2]
- [David Fowlie](#) [3]
- [Gareth Evans](#) [4]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [5]
- [Indonesia](#) [6]
- [Julie Estelle](#) [7]
- [Martial Arts](#) [8]
- [Merantau](#) [9]
- [Movie Review](#) [10]
- [Oka Antara](#) [11]
- [Sony Pictures Classics](#) [12]
- [The Raid 2](#) [13]
- [The Raid: Redemption](#) [14]
- [Tio Pakusodewo](#) [15]



Rating: **4.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – Two years ago, the Indonesian film “The Raid: Redemption” smacked action movie fans upside the head. To briefly sum it up, it was nuts. The straight-forward plot took a backseat to some amazing stunt work, an insane amount of creative choreography and in-your-face violence. There’s no need to worry about the sequel, “The Raid 2,” not living up to the original... since the highly-anticipated follow up is bigger and faster and even offers an in-depth story to wrap your brain around – while getting hit upside the head once again.

Taking place a mere two hours after the previous film, we catch up with battered rookie SWAT member, Rama (Iko Uwais), who’s brought in corrupt cop, Wahyu (Pierre Gruno), and is now being taken in by a mysterious group within the police force that has a specific focus. While they commend Rama for a job well done, they now want him to go undercover, taking him once again away from his family and immersing him in the crime lords, corrupt cops and assortment of thugs and scumbags of Jakarta.



Rama (Iko Uwais) is Undercover in 'The Raid 2'

Photo credit: Sony Pictures Classics

He’s reluctant at first, but when his brother is killed off by Bejo (Alex Abbad), a young and erratic gangster, Rama is determined to take down mob boss Bangun (Tio Pakusadewo), and anyone associated with him. The supercop starts in prison, where he befriends Bangun’s only son,

Uco (Arifin Putra), making sure nothing happens to him, so when they get out, Rama has an in with the family business. As he earns their trust, Rama is forced to go along with brutal acts of violence in order to stay in character, finding himself in the middle of a complicated gang war. But as he makes progress on his dangerous mission, the restless Uco takes a series of deceptive steps to usurp his father and take out all the rival families.

That's not to say that Welsh-born writer/director Gareth Evans holds back on the action. As mentioned, this is a sequel that amplifies everything, cranking up the intensity to eleven. Brutality, amputations and decapitations are around every corner, making just about every bloody scene a nail-biter. But just as the narrative is broadened here, so too is the scope and geography of it all. Free of the confinement of a high-rise building, "Berandal" opens itself up to a wider landscape, from a muddy extended fight sequence in prison to one of the most creative and incredible car chases I've seen in recent years. As Evans jerks us from one set piece to the next, he confirms himself as one of the greatest action directors working today. None of the scenes are predictable or hard to follow, but they do get more and more gruesome and painful to watch. By the end of the movie, you'll want to check yourself into an emergency room.



Hammer Girl (Julie Estelle) in 'The Raid 2'
Photo credit: Sony Pictures Classics

In the spirit of upping the ante, Evans gives Rama three formidable foes to contend with for the film's climactic third act. There's The Assassin (Cecep Arif Rahman), who has a penchant for knives, Hammer Girl (Julie Estelle), whose weapons of choice are all in her name and her brother, and Baseball Bat Man (Very Tri Yulisman), who also fancies an obvious weapon. These guys will make your palms sweat. You won't be able to take your eyes off their cringe-worthy fights with Rama, and their scenes wind up being some of the most memorable of "Berandal". When talking about this movie with others, you'll no doubt be mentioning these three. What they lack in dialogue they make up for in physical presence.

Speaking of dialogue, the actors have much more to say in this sequel. There are definitely plot-forwarding moments between fights that involve exposition or character development and normally I would complain about such scenes slowing down the pace, but in this case, they were a welcome breather. Evans allows us to come up for air in these talking heads scenes, as he builds more conflict and tightens the psychological screws on Rama's situation.

Uwais' committed portrayal of Rama is the driving force of the film, despite several other compelling performances. Like in "Redemption", he again plays Rama as our gateway to this crazy world of relentless action and betrayal. It's easy to be both amazed and entertained by this actor's physically exhaustive efforts, yet the emotional beats of desperation and frustration are there as well.

As if we couldn't tell from this previous films, "The Raid 2" confirms Evans as a remarkable and exciting action director. By varying his approach from shaky cameras to long shots and quick cuts, Evans keeps the visceral momentum going while leaving us guessing what could possibly come next.

There are definitely scenes in this film where I found myself cringing from the unsettling action. Maybe I was uneasy that I was actually getting a kick out of it all. That's what a good action high does though. My nerves still get rattled thinking about "The Raid 2: Berandal" and that confirms its success. This is a must-see for action movie fans.

"The Raid 2" continues its limited release in Chicago on April 4th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Iko Uwais, Julie Estelle, Alex Abbad, Tio Pakusodewo and Oka Antara. Written and directed by Gareth Evans. Rated "R"

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Links:

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- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/david-j-fowlie>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/gareth-evans>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/hollywoodchicagocom-content>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/indonesia>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/julie-estelle>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/martial-arts>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/merantau>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/review.html>
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- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/sony-pictures-classics>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/the-raid-2>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/the-raid-redemption>
- [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/tio-pakusodewo>