

Tom Hardy's Mesmerizing 'Locke' Makes You Question Who You Are

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Rating: **4.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – It's impossible to simply play spectator through the forward-moving experimental indie "Locke" without analyzing your own past. And only a zombie could sit through this one-man film without questioning what choices you'd make in Tom Hardy's shoes.

The 85-minute film, which stars Hardy and features only him on screen simply in a car, isn't a movie you can simply be entertained by. Though the credits only list Hardy (who played Bane in "The Dark Knight Rises") along with various other people for their voice work, the other star of the film who is quietly uncredited is *you*.



Tom Hardy stars as Ivan Locke in "Locke".

Photo credit: A24

And that is this visionary film's primary power. From a box-office perspective, the film's challenge is its small release: only 25 theatres and \$112,000 earned domestically over the past week since it opened anywhere. But for those who are able to find it, you'll see that "Locke" set out to be different on so many levels and succeeds in standing out from the crowd.

Time only moves forward. Never do we dig into Ivan Locke's past, and interestingly, we don't need to. We learn that he's a good man who has made one fatal mistake. He's decisive and he makes a very daring choice. Whether that choice is right or wrong is up to you to decide, but Ivan sticks by it and accepts the consequences that come with it.

His world comes crashing down in a 85-minute drive to London. You're but a fly on the wall for the whole drive that actually happens in real time. The film simply moves the camera around the car for its entirety. As a low-budget film that was shot in a mere eight nights simply with three cameras affixed to a car, high-budget films need to remember that character and story matter most. Expensive Hollywood trickery often is filler for a film that is otherwise too weak at its very core.

While the confined space might sound like it'd be boring because there's no other cinematic variety, it's constantly tense and engaging because it's actually driven by a compelling character with a real-life story. It doesn't need any other action, special effects or even any other characters on screen.

And because we never see anyone aside from Ivan with our eyes, we actually get to know the other important people in his life through their voices only. We wonder what they look like. We remember them, too, and even their names. This isn't something that can be said about many films and certainly isn't often the case about characters we never actually see.



Tom Hardy stars as Ivan Locke in "Locke".

Photo credit: A24

Each voice character has a very defined and memorable role. Ruth Wilson as Katrina is the wife who has just made Ivan sausages and is excited for his arrival at home. His sons desperately want Ivan at home to watch the big soccer game together. Andrew Scott as Donal and Ben Daniels as Gareth are the often-funny work guys who are trying not to screw up Europe's largest concrete pour even though Ivan isn't in person to lead the charge.

All the while, Olivia Colman as Bethan is the five-ton elephant in the room.

But Ivan himself – with his work and personal relationships – is enough to completely keep your attention. He is a person we can all be and perhaps might already have been. Ivan is married with kids. He's got a good job and he's important there. He's relatively happy at home and in his marriage, but he's acted irrationally in a moment of weakness. Now he must man-up and deal with it.

Since he's made the mistake, the burning question he must answer – and you must ask yourself – is what he's going to do about it. Is Ivan a good guy, a bad guy or just a real guy who is simply grappling with how life actually is?

"Locke," which can be viewed as an 85-minute advertisement for BMW, gives hope to today's filmmaking by reminding us about all we need to enjoy a great film. Its minimalism points out everything superfluous in movies today that we're addicted to but don't really require.



Tom Hardy stars as Ivan Locke in "Locke".

Photo credit: A24

None of it would have been possible without Hardy. We've seen his anger, violence and brutality in "The Dark Knight Rises," "Warrior" and "Bronson." But Hardy is at the top of his game in "Locke" without any of those previous trademarks. His only tools here are his voice – often calm, confident and collected – and his evocative face. That's literally it.

When that's all you've got and you're magnetic from your first scene until the credits, now *that's* captivating acting. Here he's a hard-working, emotional and even sensitive man who's caught between what's right and wrong. He finds himself living in the grey matter in between and that's as important of a story to tell as any that could be told.

Unlike one-man films such as "Cast Away," "Buried," "127 Hours," "Wrecked," "Moon" and most recently "All is Lost," "Locke" isn't about being isolated by an island, a grave or the open sea. And Tom Hardy isn't battling life or death. Instead, he's isolated inside his own mind and he's fighting to do what's right.

The choices he makes carries him to a conclusion that no one could say is right or wrong. Writer/director Steven Wright ("Eastern Promises," "Dirty Pretty Thing," "Redemption") isn't making a statement about which choice he believes is the one you should choose. Rather, as great films do, he's illustrating a complex scenario and challenging you to decide for yourself.

"Locke," which opened in Chicago on May 2, 2014, stars Tom Hardy with voice work from Olivia Colman, Ruth Wilson, Andrew Scott, Ben Daniels, Tom Holland, Bill Milner, Danny Webb, Alice Lowe, Silas Carson, Lee Ross and Kirsty Dillon. The film is written and directed by Steven Knight. "Locke" is rated "R" for language throughout. The film is 85 minutes.



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