

Overall Story of 'The Equalizer' Doesn't Add Up

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on September 26, 2014 - 12:25pm

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Rating: **2.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – You could call “The Equalizer” a bit of an underachiever. It re-teams Oscar winner Denzel Washington with his “Training Day” director Antoine Fuqua for a movie remake of a 1980’s TV show with a cult following, but the film as a whole adds up to less than the sum of its parts.

Washington stars as an ex-CIA agent now living the quiet life by day working in a Home Depot-like store. In contrast, by night he often uses his particular set of skills to help underdogs in need. He gets to be a good guy, while being the baddest badass on the planet. The Equalizer is the kind of guy who could literally mop the floor with half the cast of “The Expendables.”

Yet he certainly takes his time getting going. For the first 25 minutes or so we see him as a combination father figure and life coach – offering helpful advice, platitudes of inspiration, and fist bumps of positivity. He finally sheds the thousand watt smile and takes on the Russian mob after he steps in to protect a young prostitute (Chloe Grace Moretz, looking nearly unrecognizable), who is beaten up by her pimp.



Denzel Washington is the Title Character in 'The Equalizer'

Photo credit: Columbia Pictures

Despite his involvement with the inane “Olympus Has Fallen,” director Fuqua knows his way around an action picture. He can even make the

clichéd images of Washington standing with a gun in the pouring rain or walking away from an explosion seem at least stylish. However, the film succumbs to the same spirit that overtook Bruce Willis and the later "Die Hard" movies – Washington's not a man, he's a superman. So there's never any doubt about whether he will dispatch ten men coming at him at once, it's just a question of how he will do it.

Washington is still a credible tough guy, but I tended to notice that his fights were mostly obscured. We see him in shadow, and the film never gives us a good look at him connecting a punch in any way, so much so that I was tempted to start playing spot the stunt man. It's by no means to the level of Robert De Niro's present day action movies or some of the latter Roger Moore Bond films, but it's getting there.

The lack of dramatic tension highlights the similar nature of many of the films action sequences and makes them more than a little repetitive. By the time the film reached its overlong climax it had essentially morphed into "Die-Hard"-in-a-Home-Depot, complete with Washington cauterizing his own wounds with a red hot door knob he heated up with a spare flame thrower.



Chloë Grace Moretz and Denzel Washington in 'The Equalizer'

Photo credit: Columbia Pictures

Denzel Washington can obscure a lot with that famous smile of his. He's a charismatic actor who can make even total jerks worth rooting for, and – to their credit – Fuqua and Washington don't shy away from the sheer brutality involved, when Washington's character becomes something of a "MacGyver" of weaponry. He's able to take out entire crews of henchmen without breaking a sweat, and never loses the cold shark-like glare in his eye.

The Equalizer may be on the right side, but some of his methods make him hard to root for – and this action picture has problems even he can't fix.

"The Equalizer" opens everywhere on September 26th. Featuring Denzel Washington, Chloe Grace Moretz, David Harbour, Johnny Skourtis, Bill Pullman and Melissa Leo. Written by Richard Wenk. Directed by Antoine Fuqua. Rated "R"



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