

An Adrenaline Junkie's Dream, 'Mad Max: Fury Road' a Badass Bass Haven

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Rating: **4.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – It's "the greatest action movie ever made," so says the television commercials (which means it's true). And it's buoyed by other quotables galore including "what a lovely day!," "from mastermind George Miller," "pulse pounding," "heart wrenching" and "teeth grinding". While these words are actually true, though, the film doesn't need them to sell it.

Though a cinematic "thrill ride" is often marketing speak – sometimes rightfully earned and oftentimes overhyped – this \$150 million film sells itself because it really is exactly that. Gritty, dirty, mad and fun as hell, you can't get much more of a thrill ride than "Mad Max: Fury Road". And there's no other filmmaker for the job than George Miller yet again, who not only proves he's still got it but reminds us that he's more than just the "Mad Max" mastermind. He's also the creator of the post-apocalyptic action genre and this is why – even decades later – other followers just look like wannabes.



Tom Hardy as Max Rockatansky in "Mad Max: Fury Road".

Image credit: Jasin Boland, Warner Bros. Pictures

Anchored by Max Rockatansky's line "my world is reduced to a single instinct: survive!" and the initial image of him eating a living lizard because – well, why not? – Tom Hardy's metal-faced return as Bane (I mean, Mad Max) isn't even the reason this film succeeds as one of the best and most memorable of 2015 so far.

Nor is it the kickass performance by Charlize Theron as the one-handed Imperator Furiosa – a lone ranger who shows us the unstoppable force of teaming up with the rogue Mad Max. And it's not even our wonderfully vicious villain Immortan Joe – played by the 68-year-old Hugh Keays-Byrne – who, by the way, played the smaller role of Toecutter way back in George Miller's "Mad Max" in 1979. Nor is it the delightfully desperate and even touching role by Nicholas Hoult as Nux, who all along desires to die an honorable death and rise above to a place much more like nirvana.

The star of this film is the post-apocalyptic, middle-of-nowhere *wasteland* (filmed in the Namid Desert in Namibia, Australia, etc.) that George Miller brings to life. You're sucked in from the second the fast-action film starts and given a few minutes of dramatic release to breathe during the film, but for the most part this no-holds-barred, anything-goes world of martial law is relentlessly entertaining.



Left to right: Riley Keough as Capable, Zoë Kravitz as Toast the Knowing, Courtney Eaton as Cheedo the Fragile, Rosie Huntington-Whiteley as The Splendid Angharad, Tom Hardy as Mad Max and Abbey Lee as The Dag in "Mad Max: Fury Road".

Image credit: Jasin Boland, Warner Bros. Pictures

It's the dirt, the gasoline, the metal, the weapons, the fire and – as important as the visual eyegasm of this environment – *the sound*. With the environment as the star of this film more so than any of the crazy characters within it, the sound is an equal co-star. This film's memorable, bass-heavy, constantly rumbly music comes from Junkie XL (born as Tom Holkenborg), who has composed for "Resident Evil," "The Dark Knight Rises," "Man of Steel" and all three "Madagascar" movies (ha!).

With so many films coming out so often, you must pick and choose. Some films you can skip entirely while others you can wait until they come home. But your first mistake would be not seeing this movie at all. Your second mistake would be seeing it at home. I don't care how many bones you spent on your fancy home theatre. If you're not seeing this film in a real movie theatre with much larger speakers than you can fit in your house, you're not seeing "Mad Max: Fury Road".

While this film has rightfully earned all of its praise and its expensive advertising campaign is making it impossible for you to miss it, there is a blurry world to consider when you think about its story. Its environment is much better fleshed out than its plot line, which really could have been this one or any one of George Miller's previous "Mad Max" stories including "Mad Max" in 1979, "Mad Max 2" (AKA "The Road Warrior") in 1981 and "Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome" in 1985.



Hugh Keays-Byrne as Immortan Joe in "Mad Max: Fury Road".

Image credit: Warner Bros. Pictures

Since his leading role as Mad Max by the then-little-known Mel Gibson in 1979, 1981 and 1985 and with Tina Turner joining the franchise in 1985, 2015's version can be explained like this: "An evil warlord controls a pocket of desert people who never shower. The rest of Earth is too expensive to film, so it's easier to say they're just all dead."

Wait, there is more. "All the while, a guy named Bane – sorry, I mean Mad Max again – takes a chapter from 'The Dark Knight Rises' and

has the same voice and tortured upbringing. Max bumps into a desert renegade who lost her hand and we don't know how and we don't care. She's pissed too – like everyone is because apparently no one takes Xanax or Zoloft – and her reason for being isn't to tell us how she lost her hand but to liberate a bunch of desert babes (including Zoë Kravitz, Abbey Lee, Courtney Eaton, Riley Keough and the already preggers Rosie Huntington-Whiteley) who aren't nearly as ugly as everyone else. Why? Because she's perturbed that our villain just wants to use them to make his babies.”

So yeah, this isn't an Oscar-winning script from George Miller, Brendan McCarthy and Nick Lathouris. It has taken 30 years for George Miller to return to his “Mad Max” roots, but thankfully he's back and better than ever. While his stints with the animated animals “Babe: Pig in the City” (1998), “Happy Feet” (2006) and “Happy Feet Two” (2011) were certainly cute, this is the epitome of how to have fun at a movie and this is what a *reboot* should *really* be.

“Mad Max: Fury Road” stars Tom Hardy, Charlize Theron, Nicholas Hoult, Hugh Keays-Byrne, Zoë Kravitz, Rosie Huntington-Whiteley, Riley Keough, Abbey Lee, Courtney Eaton, Nathan Jones and Josh Helman from writer and director George Miller and writers Brendan McCarthy and Nick Lathouris. The film is rated “R” for intense sequences of violence throughout and for disturbing images. It has a running time of 120 minutes and opened on May 15, 2015.



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