

Action scenes are the highlight of 'John Wick: Chapter 3 – Parabellum'

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Rating: «««« out of «««««

Running Time: 130 minutes

2014 offered a real surprise in the form of the exceptional action flick, *John Wick*. The hits kept coming in the 2017 sequel, which attempted to explore the inner workings of a criminal underworld and its various factions. The action continues in

John Wick: Chapter 3 - Parabellum

, which pits the hero against, well, just about everybody. Viewers may suffer a bit from fatigue and this title's inability to tie up loose ends, but the fight choreography on display is phenomenal and should please genre fans.

As the film begins, John Wick (Keanu Reeves) finds himself, not only being excommunicated from the official, umm, well, it's kind of a union of professional assassins, but also having a \$14 million dollar contract on his head. With every hitman gunning for him and friends like Continental hotel manager Winston (Ian McShane) and concierge Cheron (Lance Reddick) unable to assist, Wick must escape New York City. He decides to try to locate old acquaintance Sofia (Halle Berry) in the hopes she can direct him to the head of the organization, so that he can convince them to restore his status. Also mixed up in this business is an Adjudicator (Asia Kate Dillon), and a skilled killer named Zero (Mark Dacascos), who are determined to eliminate Wick.

The first act is so wild and stunt-filled that almost nothing else in the feature can top it. Simple and direct (you can literally walk into this film without seeing the second feature and be caught up on the plot in about two lines of dialogue). It simply announces that Wick has less than an hour before he is kicked out of his guild and the contract on him goes live. The concerned protagonist races around New York City attempting to plan his next move while being monitored by killers all around him, some of whom are considering jumping the starting line to collect the reward.

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Three outrageous, fast-paced and wince-inducing action scenes follow, with Wick employing everything from books on library shelves, a (conveniently placed) series of weapons in display cases, to a stable full of horses, in order to defend himself. These opening 30 or 40 minutes are totally outrageous and endlessly entertaining, with Reeves expertly throwing himself around rooms and fighting it out with bad guys in lengthy, extended takes. The footage is reminiscent of the stellar action from a Hong Kong production, standing above most Hollywood genre fare.

Alas, the middle of the movie slows down somewhat as more characters are introduced, awkward discussions take place and plot points are divulged. These scenes aren't as strong, but at least the new cast members are amusing, including the smug and officious Adjudicator and the skilled assassin, Zero. The latter seems absolutely thrilled by the prospect of facing off against his personal hero. Actor Dacascos makes the most of what could have been a bland part, earning plenty of laughs as he behaves like a fan during his conversations with Wick. The pair's final battle also matches the high energy level witnessed during the film's opening.

Besides a few repetitive patches, this film does have another element of minor annoyance. It ultimately doesn't resolve much of the conflict it introduces, and ends up simply setting the stage for yet another sequel. After witnessing nearly 360 minutes of onscreen carnage, the thought of enduring another two-plus hours to complete the seemingly simple story of a hitman's revenge, seems a bit of an overextension, and one that may leave some starting to feel exhausted. Additionally, it's hard to think that the twists, turns and shifting allegiances will hold up to much scrutiny upon further examination.

Still, should Reeves return to the fray and deliver action like the moments featured here, this reviewer would take one more trip into this kinetic world (just make sure you wrap it all up next time, okay?). In the end *John Wick: Chapter 3 - Parabellum* isn't going to win any awards for nuanced storytelling or subtlety, but there's no topping its fantastic, pulse-pounding action.

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