

MAD MAX: FURY ROAD Is a Nitro-Charged Thrill Ride

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Rated: R

Running Time: 120 minutes

« « « « ***out of 4 Stars***

Well, it's hard to imagine another action film of this or any year in recent memory topping the adrenaline-pumping, motor-charged, post-apocalyptic world of Mad Max: Fury Road. Some 30 years after the last movie featuring the character, everything has been updated and to some extent reinvented. Regardless, the end result is just as strong - it's a nitro-charged thrill ride.

That's not to say that director George Miller (*Mad Max*, *The Road Warrior*, and curiously enough, *Babe: Pig in the City*) hasn't thrown a few new wrinkles into the mix. This is essentially a two hour chase that begins mere seconds after the opening narration and doesn't let up until the final scene. It is a bold approach is one that could have easily numbed the audience.

Max (Tom Hardy) is still a loner in the wasteland, struggling to simply survive and haunted by the memory of his deceased family. When he's taken prisoner by a society controlled by ruthless dictator Immortan Joe (Hugh Keays-Byrne), his only instinct is to break free. But events take a more complicated turn when he crosses paths with Imperator Furiosa (Charlize Theron), one of Joe's ranks attempting to escape with precious cargo. While the two don't trust each other, they soon realize they need one another to survive the horde.

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If you're familiar with previous movies in the series, rest assured. Digital effects are in use at times, but there are still plenty of real thrills and stunts. Everything about the pursuits is amplified to the tenth degree. There are multiple roving gangs with more cars, not to mention some stunning vehicular carnage. In fact, each gang appears to have its own specific kind of sense of style, almost as if the engines themselves are their own characters.

It's all shot in a colorful desert landscape. As expected, this is a director who knows how to shoot action. It's cut together brilliantly, with characters moving over and under cars in an exciting and dynamic fashion. Heck, they even hop from vehicle to vehicle and use poles to move the distances between with thrilling abandon. Despite multiple characters all doing separate things in a crazy chase, every movement is clear and easy to follow.

Truthfully, it may be a little overwhelming at first. The action is grand from the outset and we're placed right in the middle of it, with only basic information about the participants. It's gorgeous to watch and well put together, but the first act doesn't feature much of an emotional hook. However, a funny thing happens as the movie progresses. Brief conversations and actions allow us into the heads of these people. In the end, they are simple but relatable figures and over the second act we get to know and (in some cases) even like the characters.

Early on, Max has a selfish survival instinct, but this changes as he spends more time within his party (and just to make the message clearer, becomes more human as he removes a mask affixed and covering his face). Furiosa has her motivations for escaping clarified too, and even the supporting characters become interesting. There's a sickly "War-Boy" named Nux (Nicolas Hoult) desperate to please his leader and willing to do anything to prove his worthiness. Even within his society, he has to contend with violent co-workers out to steal his thunder.

Viewers watching will find that the movie actually manages to build more tension, drama and pathos as it develops. By the blood-pumping finale, it has completely worked its spell. Of course, helping alleviate some of the intensity are some equally radical moments of humor interspersed amidst the chaos (particularly funny is a moving vehicle with a guitar-player and drummers adding a musical score within the film during their hunt).

It is clear that director Miller is a fan of samurai and western film archetypes - applying them to Max and a fantastic, unreal world in a consistently dazzling fashion. Not only has he succeeded,

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but he's experimented and made a few brave alterations to the formula that should excite audiences in entirely new ways. What starts as a merely solid action film ends up a fantastic one. *Mad Max: Fury Road* is a resounding success, an epic thrill-ride that will set a new standard for action.

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