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Blu-ray Review

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Escape From New York

What?

The future. Manhattan Island is a self contained prison. Inmates are left to fend for themselves. When the President's plane comes down inside the boundary walls, infamous criminal Snake Pliskin is forced into mounting a rescue mission. Classic John Carpenter.

Classic indeed. This is the kind of thing John Carpenter used to deliver with relish. Of course those days are sadly a distant memory, but never the less, Escape From New York remains timeless, a true cult classic. Any reservations I had before sitting down to watch this new Blu-ray release, having not seen the film in a number or years were quickly dashed. Incredibly the film still feels fresh after twenty seven years. Yes the display in Snake's glider looks like it was designed by a five year old, and the fact that that Pliskin's digital watch appears to be the first ever invented matters not. What really counts is the look and feel of the film and it still looks as gritty and grimy as ever. The production design was groundbreaking in its day and still stands up well, the story is ludicrous but brilliant, while Kurt Russell's performance as the snarling Snake is one of the most memorable. When you throw a pimped out Isaac Hayes into the mix, a truly over the top performance from Ernest Borgnine and some classic dialogue, you have something pretty special.

Optics:

The question I was asking myself was how good can this film look. The film is nearly thirty years old, the original budget was fairly meager, and as a result, on DVD it never looked like anything other than a low budget movie. When I say there are moments when Escape From New York on Blu-ray looks like a brand new release, I'm pretty sure you will be as surprised as I was.

Blacks are deep while detail is good throughout. On the whole contrast is good even though a fair number of scenes become a little muddled with dark clothing in particular loosing definition. Although a number of scenes feature over saturated reds and oranges, the overall quality of the transfer is beyond anything I had hoped for.

Sonics:

The DTS-HD Master Audio is a huge improvement over any previous Escape From New York release. Helicopters pan across the front three speakers, then all around the room utilising all three rear speakers. Decent bass levels back up the action. As expected the original stereo track cannot be hidden completely. Lacklustre punches and gunfire and the tinny smashing of windows highlight the true soundtrack's true origins. The odd weak effect aside, this is a track that exceeded any hopes I had and thankfully, Carpenter's brilliant synth score has never sounded so good!

Extras:

The audio commentary with Russell and Carpenter is great fun and full interesting information that will really appeal to fans of the film and the contributors alike. The short retrospective documentary also impresses and is one that fans should enjoy. The extras are rounded out with a short (exclusive) interview
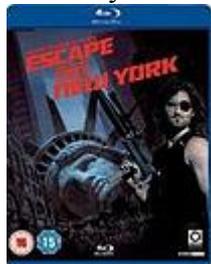
with Carpenter, the famous deleted intro and a selection of trailers.

Well?

Another Carpenter classic arrives in high definition and is deservedly treated to a decent make over and good set of extra features.

Tom Day

Director:

John Carpenter

Starring:

Kurt Russell
Lee Van Cleef
Ernest Borgnine
Donald Pleasence
Isaac Hayes

Best line:

- "Are you going to kill me now Snake?" - "I'm to tired. Maybe later."

Tagline:

"1997. New York City is now a maximum security prison. Breaking out is impossible. Breaking in is insane."

Description:

Optimum Releasing
UK
Region B
Rated 15
1Hr 39 Mins
2.35:1
(Anamorphic)
DTS-HD 5.1 (Master Audio)

Audio commentary by John Carpenter and Kurt Russell
Retrospective documentary
Exclusive interview with Carpenter
Deleted opening sequence
Trailers

Ratings: (Out of 10)

Film 8.0
Optics 7.0
Sonics 7.0
Extras 7.0
Overall 8.0

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