

## "DREDD" (DVD/Blu-ray Review)

Written by Chris Alexander  
Friday, 11 January 2013 15:11

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Where do we point the finger for the theatrical failing of DREDD? An invisible marketing campaign? The hard R? The association with the previous, lunk-headed 1995 big screen adaptation of the beloved British cult comic book property?

Maybe all of the above but really, the damage is done and all we can do is move on. Released on Tuesday on Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray and DVD, the pulsating, straight faced, straight up, instant splatter-action classic DREDD is now in stores, online and VOD. It's out there, waiting to be appreciated and admired by the legion of perhaps lazy, and perhaps simply uninformed, pundits who ignored it during that "blink and you'll miss it" big screen bow. If you're one of those who missed immersing yourself in its mind-blowing 3D charms, don't blow it this time...

DREDD stars Karl Urban (DOOM) as the masked (yes, he always keeps the mask on) future cop Dredd, a "Judge" who like his fellow officers have the legal right to act as executioners of their criminal foils if the circumstance calls for it. Set in a dystopian wasteland dubbed Mega City One, where citizens are ghettoized into high rise fortresses called "Blocks", the film opens with Urban's growling, low timbre narration, setting up the violent world he works in and giving context for the actions that the law needs to take to keep this volatile environment in whatever half-assed order it can muster. As for plot, the narrative is refreshingly simple, uncomplicated and fierce. It seems a street drug called "Slo-mo" has become the new crack. Cheap and easy to produce, the brain-frying narcotic gives its users a euphoric distortion of time, with seconds perceived as orgasmic minutes, the world wound down to a wide-eyed crawl. This device is gorgeously exploited (especially in 3D) for the many sequences in which characters do take a hit, and the viewer is suddenly thrust into the headspace of the addict, all set to the tune of Paul Leonard-Morgan's relentless electronic score. Said sequences see Leonard-Morgan slowing down pop music to a crawl (originally Justin Bieber music!) resulting in a quasi-choral new age sound that is completely fresh and wildly appropriate for the subject's psyche, captured with digital cameras at 3000 frames per second. Stunning.

Dredd is partnered with rookie Judge Anderson (Olivia Thirlby) who is also a clairvoyant, a natural phenomenon that occurs every so often in this not-so brave new world. The two armored officers are called to a "megablock" fortress humorously named Peachtrees to investigate the murder of a resident and, after infiltrating a drug lair in one of the suites (a scene that results in more ultra-detailed slow motion coupled with outrageously languid bloodshed), they incur the wrath of the dreaded Ma-Ma (GAME OF THRONES' Lena Headey). With her scarred face, blackened teeth and evil sneer, Ma-Ma is a fantastic screen villain; sexy, horrifying and lethal, the Queen of the Slow-mo empire and a malevolent force forged in the

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gutters. After capturing one of Ma-Ma's henchmen, Dredd and Anderson find themselves trapped in the tenement, with Ma-Ma offering every resident an ultimatum: kill the Judges or be killed themselves.

Buckets of blood and bullet-shredded flesh ensue.



DREDD is a marvel. A throwback to the icy attitude and unsparingly arch violence of Paul Verhoeven sci-fi thrillers like ROBOCOP (the likes of which owes more than a bit of debt to the DREDD books) and TOTAL RECALL, but stripping away the broad humor in favor of macho comic book pulp. The humor comes from just how far director Pete Travis and writer Alex Garland (28 DAYS LATER) take the violence, which is delightfully over the top (the scene where Ma-Ma and her droogs open fire on, well everyone, is an eye-widening, horrifying hoot). But there's a dignity and even a soul here as well—style mixed with a dash or two of humanity and even empathy. It's that element that really sets the film apart. Urban is fantastic too, especially considering his performance consists of physical stance and his mouth, lips, teeth and stubbled jaw.

The Blu-ray combo release is stocked with quality bonus materials. "Mega City Master: 35 years of Judge Dredd" is a breathless primer charting the storied history the Judge Dredd comics with creators John Wagner and Carlos Ezquerra offering insight. It's a short doc, but it adds weight to the film and it's easy to see that the makers of DREDD do the source justice. "Days of Chaos" is decent and surprisingly thorough considering its 15 minute look at the production design of the Mega City One. The rest of the features are brief, but effective EPK promo materials that examine costumes and the 3D process, plus the usual trailers and TV spots. It's a shame there's nothing here that dissects the monstrous score, the likes of which give the film its hypnotic rhythm, an essential component to its success.

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Yes, it bombed in theatres, meaning that another big screen DREDD venture is unlikely. Or maybe not. If enough of a rabid fanbase evolves post-BR release, there might be enough interest to get Dredd and Anderson back in action on a grand scale. One can dream...

MOVIE: 🍌🍌🍌🍌

DISC PACKAGE: 🍌🍌🍌🍌