

## “HOBO WITH A SHOTGUN” (Film Review)

Written by Samuel Zimmerman  
Friday, 25 March 2011 09:58

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The second “Run With Us” (the unmistakably '80s, completely inspiring theme song from the Canadian cartoon THE RACCOONS) blasts over the end credits of HOBO WITH A SHOTGUN, it's an incredible and completely appropriate release of the sheer fire and energy that's been built up from the minds of director Jason Eisener, scripter John Davies, producer Rob Cotterill and cinematographer Karim Hussain for the preceding 84 minutes. Candy-colored and gorgeous, graphic and devoid of taste, HOBO WITH A SHOTGUN is crafted from a balance of pure, personal heart and absolute savagery. It's awesome.

Famously born out of a trailer contest tied to GRINDHOUSE, HOBO WITH A SHOTGUN (now playing in Canada from Alliance Films, coming on-demand April 1 and to theaters May 6 from Magnet Releasing) isn't being ushered out under the same banner as MACHETE, but it's a bit difficult to completely separate HOBO from that Tarantino/Rodriguez collaboration and all it has wrought, which isn't a bad thing (especially when you consider how much better it is than most of them). HOBO isn't necessarily spawned from the same kind of gritty/realist '70s aesthetic as a lot of neo-grindhouse movies, but from a brasher, ruder, punkish place. There's an easy connection to be made to the films of Troma and splattery VHS flicks—yet while that's most definitely there, HOBO is also a finely wrought expansion on many of those ideas, one that's actually awesome, instead of laughably so.



Starring Rutger Hauer as the eponymous and enigmatic protagonist who pulls into Hope City and finds anything but, the film confronts him with degenerates, sadism, a complete lack of moral compass and the town's leading crime boss, Drake (Brian Downey) and his two sons, Slick (Gregory Smith) and Ivan (Nick Bateman), who've vowed to lay waste to everything,

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slaughtering their way to the top. In an effort to find the peace he craves, the Hobo foregoes his want of a lawnmower and instead purchases the titular firearm, blasting his way through the grime.

But that’s just the tip, as HOBO literally explodes with ideas, from the hobo’s own self-appointed protector status over prostitute Abby (Molly Dunsworth), to extended monologues over the nature of bears, to the villains’ (and the film’s) secret weapon, The Plague. In the midst of terribly black humor, absolutely horrific and slightly obscene gore and the general chaos that reigns, out step two completely insane and weaponized characters who, in a brief exposition of their centuries-old allegiance and showstopping assault on a hospital, win the film in a heartbeat.

Truth be told, the nature of HOBO’s violence is a lot to take in. The film asks audiences to find satirical and absurd what most with good sense would peg as downright offensive. It’s bloodsoaked, unflinching and a bit assaultive. But the film’s willingness to consistently challenge its viewers, begging them to journey into over-the-top depravity that many pictures only emptily promise, is worth applauding, not only because HOBO succeeds in making its heightened reality a visceral and frightening place, with threatening and truly insane bad guys, but also contrasts Hauer and Dunsworth’s absolute sincerity in their roles, reinforcing the effects of the sweeter moments *and* the absurdity.

It sounds odd to throw the word “sweet” into the mix, but there’s no doubt HOBO ends excitedly, more amped-up than downtrodden and, as aforementioned, pulls together nicely with the inclusion of “Run With Us.” The song not only speaks to the general tone of everything that has come before it, but its relative obscurity speaks to Eisener’s specific, fully realized vision. It’s a touch that only could’ve come from a director, or writer, who was dying to see it used, and adds a personal flourish that, among many others in the film, raises HOBO above just an amalgamation of influences into a wild and original creation.



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