

M: I-2 Is Parody Played Straight: "Mission: Impossible 2"

Written by Mike Schulz

Wednesday, 31 May 2000 06:00

- [Download Unity 3D Pro MAC](#)
- [Buy Adobe Creative Suite 5 Master Collection MAC \(en,ja,de,fr,es,it,pt,nl,sv,cs,pl,tr\)](#)
- [9.95\\$ Adobe Creative Cloud Design Tools All-in-One For Dummies cheap oem](#)
- [Buy Cheap QuarkXPress 7.3 Passport](#)
- [Buy Autodesk AutoCAD LT 2012 \(64-bit\) \(en\)](#)
- [Discount - Adobe Photoshop CS5 Extended](#)
- [Buy Smith Micro Spring Cleaning 11 Deluxe MAC \(en\)](#)
- [Buy OEM 4Media DVD Ripper Platinum 5](#)
- [Discount - Autodesk AutoCAD Architecture 2014 \(64-bit\)](#)
- [9.95\\$ Lynda.com - PHP Essential Training cheap oem](#)
- [259.95\\$ Autodesk AutoCAD Raster Design 2014 \(32-bit\) cheap oem](#)
- [9.95\\$ Lynda.com - Online Marketing Fundamentals cheap oem](#)



Mission: Impossible 2, the sequel to Brian De Palma's 1996 crime-caper flick, has a major advantage over its predecessor – you're actually able to follow the plot. For the most part.

This can, of course, have its drawbacks, especially if you're expecting anything like logic or realism in your summer escapism. I'm not necessarily, but I *still* couldn't work up much enthusiasm for the work, and for reasons that have nothing to do with its plotting. The biggest problem with *M: I-2* is the combination of director John Woo, screenwriter Robert Towne, and actor/producer Tom Cruise, all of whom have their own particular strengths, but prove to be a lethal mix when in collaboration. It's one of those mergings of talents – Woo, with his languid-yet-kinetic slo-mo action scenes; Towne, with his tricky character exposition and stylish dialogue; Cruise, with his humor and aw-shucks earnestness – that could've either been inspired or a bust. And it's not inspired.

In this latest caper, Cruise again plays super-spy Ethan Hunt, who this time must find and defeat evil Sean Ambrose (Dougray Scott), a baddie who plans to leak a deadly virus in Sydney, Australia, and then get rich by providing the citizenry with the antidote, which only he has. One character asks Hunt about Ambrose's scheme: "Can it be that simple?" "Why not?" responds Hunt.

That's a really terrific line, because it slyly tweaks how convoluted the original *Mission: Impossible*

's plot

M: I-2 Is Parody Played Straight: "Mission: Impossible 2"

Written by Mike Schulz

Wednesday, 31 May 2000 06:00

was, and shows a nice self-deprecation on the part of Robert Towne, who collaborated on the first film, as well. He could almost be

apologizing

for the original's ridiculousness. (Part of the simplification is probably due to this film's PG-13 rating, as opposed to the original's R – Towne's keeping it mostly understandable for the pre-pubescent set.) Which is not to say that Towne has abandoned complications altogether; Thandie Newton shows up as the diamond thief Nyah Hall, who is loved by both Hunt and Ambrose, and who is sent by Hunt to infiltrate Ambrose's lair and help foil his plan. Will she do it, or is she more loyal to the bad guys than we expect?

All of this is well-established by Woo and Towne, and the film even starts with a couple of scenes that had me expecting the best: an enticingly off-putting prelude involving a plane crash and those latex human-masks that the series is so fond of, and the sequence – so overexposed in the film's theatrical trailers – of Cruise's Hunt performing some extremely dexterous rock-climbing, while the opening credits silently fade in and out. The two scenes back-to-back indicate what the film itself is obviously trying for – a harmonious mixture of entertaining summertime overkill and tranquil suspense – and they make you expectant for more marvels to come.

Sadly, this feeling doesn't last. The film falls apart much earlier than you'd expect in the scene where Hunt and Hall meet for the first time. It's one of those across-a-crowded-room flirtations where the romantic interests eyeball each other for an inordinate length of time (in slow-motion, of course), giving each other as much “am-I-hot-stuff-or-*what?*” smolder as they can, and I have to confess that I started laughing at

M: I-2

right then and there. Not because Cruise and Newton aren't great-looking, but because director Woo was so obviously straining to make this meeting monumental, and the actors were straining so hard to be sexy, that I caught a whiff of overreaching desperation in the staging and performance. The movie was already trying too hard and we were only 15 minutes into it.

That feeling comes back to you again and again. I've never been a fan of Woo's unique brand of mayhem, where certain critics use phrases like “poetic” and “balletic” to describe utterly conventional slo-mo action sequences, but *M: I-2* really tests your tolerance for this sort of thing. If anything, Woo's fixation on seeing every drop of sweat that exudes after being kicked in the face makes the action seem even sillier than it already is. He's really a rather perverse action director; his action scenes actually

slo

w the movie down

(and don't even get me started on the romantic sequences, which go on forever). Woo's pretension and attempts to find the “art” in action clash against Towne's terseness and economy; it's square-peg-in-the-round-hole time.

M: I-2 Is Parody Played Straight: "Mission: Impossible 2"

Written by Mike Schulz

Wednesday, 31 May 2000 06:00

And then there's Cruise. Poor, sweet, good-natured, ever-earnest Tom Cruise, who simply cannot pull off the faux "coolness" that Woo ascribes to him. As an actor, Cruise can be just fine if he's allowed to poke fun at his own screen persona (which he did wonderfully well in *Magnolia* and, especially,

Jerry Maguire

), but he can be borderline laughable when actually

playing

that persona. It's not the physicality that's the problem, as his pretty-boy looks have turned gently rugged with age; it's the voice. When Woo sets him up as a hipster badass and Cruise speaks – or, worse, shouts – with that high-pitched, not-a-nasty-thought-in-his-head timbre, the character conception collapses. In this regard, he's equally matched with Newton, whose voice contains absolutely no mystery or suggestion. Beautiful though she is, she seems inconsequential, and a little dim – she and Cruise could be teenagers playing film noir dress-up.

The rest of the cast doesn't fare much better. Dougray Scott occasionally glowers well, but his (I think) Scottish accent is off-putting, and he's never as evil as you might hope he'll be. The marvelously talented Ving Rhames, the one other holdover from the original *Mission:*

Impossible

, shows up again as Hunt's assistant, but doesn't have a single scene that allows him to demonstrate his gifts. Only Anthony Hopkins emerges unscathed in his all-too-brief scenes as Hunt's superior. His line readings and dry humor are welcome respites, and for a few moments, he stashes the movie in his jacket pocket and saunters off with it. (He also reminds you of how another classy British thespian, Vanessa Redgrave, walked off with the original film.)

I do have to give *M: I-2* credit for trying to be something different from the cookie-cutter norm of summertime action extravaganzas, and it's bound to be a huge hit, but I'd be surprised if numerous audience members didn't feel the way I felt towards it – it feels like parody played straight. And the combination of Woo, Towne, and Cruise could probably have yielded a

magnificent

parody, if they weren't so concerned with giving audiences the real thing.

M: I-2

is still awfully funny, but the fact that it's not

meant

to be also makes it kinda sad.