

Scraped Crusader: "The Dark Knight Rises" and "Red Stroke"

Written by Mike Schulz
Saturday, 21 July 2012 12:03

- [Download Microsoft MapPoint 2009 North America](#)
- [Buy Red Giant Effects Suite 11 \(32-bit\) \(en\)](#)
- [Buy Cheap Adobe Creative Suite 5 Web Premium Student And Teacher Edition MAC](#)
- [Buy OEM Adobe Creative Suite 5.5 Design Premium Student And Teacher Edition](#)
- [Buy OEM Adobe Framemaker Server 10](#)
- [Download EFD HD Tune Professional](#)
- [Download Adobe InDesign CC MAC \(Full LifeTime License\)](#)
- [Discount - Adobe Premiere Pro CS5.5](#)
- [Buy Cheap Adobe Photoshop Top Secret](#)
- [Discount - Mindjet MindManager 9 MAC](#)
- [Buy Lynda.com - Real-World XML \(en\)](#)
- [399.95\\$ Autodesk AutoCAD 2014 \(32-bit\) cheap oem](#)
- [Buy OEM Autodesk AutoCad 2011 MAC](#)
- [Download Avid Media Composer 6 MAC \(64 bit\)](#)



THE DARK KNIGHT RISES

The Dark Knight Rises, as you've perhaps heard, is the concluding chapter in Christopher Nolan's series of grandly scaled, intensely serious-minded Batman adventures that began with 2005's fittingly titled *Batman Begins* and continued with 2008's *The Dark Knight*. It is also, as you perhaps hoped, a terrifically satisfying wrap-up to the trilogy – flawed, at times *distractingly* flawed, but powerful and resonant and deeply emotional. After my lukewarm responses to *The Avengers* and *The Amazing Spider-Man*, I would've been relieved to exit this summer's latest superhero blockbuster merely content. Instead, I left Nolan's 165-minute comic-book epic simultaneously jazzed and sated, and more than ready to see it again.

If the film, which its director co-wrote with brother Jonathan, doesn't quite hit the intoxicating heights of *The Dark Knight*, that's only because Heath Ledger's Joker is no longer around, and because this climactic tale's chief adversary (for understandable and, I think, intentional reason) proves a far less enticing foe. Known only as Bane, and enacted by Tom Hardy as the physical

Scraped Crusader: "The Dark Knight Rises" and "Red Stroke"

Written by Mike Schulz
Saturday, 21 July 2012 12:03

embodiment of a brick shithouse, this imposing nemesis would seem to possess all the requirements for Batman's Über-Villain Hall of Fame: a tortured past, unrelenting sadistic urges, a plan to blow Gotham City's citizenry to smithereens. Yet what Bane also has here is a gunmetal mask with a mouthguard that resembles something that trappers lay out to cripple bears, complete with a voice-altering breathing apparatus that turns the act of speaking into pure torture ... for *us*.

I really do like *The Dark Knight Rises*, but has any screen actor ever been more unfairly waylaid by a prop than Tom Hardy? On one level, I absolutely understand the Nolan brothers' decision to make Bane – who first battled DC Comics' Batman in 1993 – their movie's resident psychopath, even beyond the promise of the character's megalomaniacal audacity. In the wake of Ledger's instantly legendary portrayal, to say nothing of the actor's tragic passing, wouldn't any performer attempting a similarly bravura madman turn be viewed as the lesser of two evildoers? It consequently makes perfect sense for the Nolans to present us with a threatening lunatic who, with his mouth completely hidden, literally *can't* grin or sneer or deadpan in ways that could conceivably bring Ledger to mind. Against considerable expectation, you can watch this new Batman outing without spending inordinate time missing the Joker and wondering about what nasty fun he might've provided.

But while the eyes are generally an actor's most expressive tools, and Hardy does wonders with his here, our being robbed of most of his features denies us the full spectrum of crazy that the man could've no doubt delivered. (The mind reels at the thought of Batman waging war against the devastatingly feral and funny Tom Hardy of *Bronson*.) And with Bane's mask muddying his diction, and Hardy's natural British accent already pretty thick, I'd say we miss out on close to a quarter of the character's lines, which, when they're decipherable at all, sound as though they're being spoken by an annoyingly pretentious English professor through a roll of toilet paper. (Actually, the sound quality is uncharacteristically spotty during *much*

of Nolan's latest, with the blare of Hans Zimmer's relentless score frequently drowning out the dialogue.) Simply put, Hardy's Bane is intimidating in *The Dark Knight Rises*, but because so little of his malevolence has the chance to fully register, he's not nearly as scary as he needs to be.



If pressed, and not terribly hard, I could compose a list of additionally problematic elements in the film, among them the confusingly staged aerial hijacking that opens the movie, Batman's

Scraped Crusader: "The Dark Knight Rises" and "Red Stroke"

Written by Mike Schulz
Saturday, 21 July 2012 12:03

and Bane's brutal but visually uninteresting *mano a mano* fistfights – why does Batman risk knuckle damage by continually punching Bane in the *mask*

? – and the presence of the eternally phlegmatic Matthew Modine. (And while the moment was lovely, did anyone else find it odd that the little kid hired to sing that *a cappella*

rendition of our national anthem was actually British?) But I hope it suggests just how enraptured I was with

The Dark Knight Rises

that these problems, and even my significant disappointment with Bane, only mildly sullied my overall enjoyment. Nolan and his expert collaborators have crafted an impassioned, ambitious, splendidly paced entertainment featuring more than its share of major and minor pleasures – and considering that the “minor” ones include the actors' subtly rendered pain and sorrow and purpose that give the film its emotional breadth and depth, they're hardly minor at all.

Certainly, the movie's show-stopper set pieces – principally the horrific destruction of Gotham City's pro-football field and the demolition of several bridges, the latter viewed in stomach-tightening long shots – are take-your-breath-away stunning, and the arrival of Batman's new, artillery-laden hovercraft, nicknamed “The Bat,” merits the awed cheers it receives; visually, the movie is rather extraordinary. (Cinematographer Wally Pfister, who lensed the entire Batman series and won an Oscar for Nolan's *Inception*, gives his sunlit images a gleaming vitality and again proves himself a master of evocative nighttime photography, suggesting that Gotham after-hours suffers from a nightly rotting of the soul.) And without leading this review into a spoiler zone, allow me to say that the film's last 45 minutes are a nearly miraculous demonstration of speed, narrative clarity, and wondrously sharp editing (by Lee Smith) keeping suspense alive through a number of intertwined narratives – even one that finds the clichéd “ticking red clock” employed as a plot device. All throughout, overly familiar comic-book staples feel fresh here, but more importantly, they feel dramatically *necessary*

, and Nolan and his production team are fortunate to have a wish-list cast on hand to provide the gravitas and humanity their obvious hard work merits.

Viewers can, and likely will, debate which of *The Dark Knight Rises'* superb performers walks off with best-in-show honors, and an argument could easily be made for Christian Bale, who not only plays (former) billionaire playboy Bruce Wayne with his usual, marvelously detailed complexity, but whose Batman is more expressive, and even a good deal funnier, than he's previously been allowed to be. (In one of the film's niftier in-jokes, Batman briefly turns away from Anne Hathaway's cat burglar Selina Kyle, and when he turns back and sees that she's vanished, he quietly growls, “So

that's

what that feels like.”) Yet this is a follow-up film in which every returning character (Michael Caine's Alfred, Gary Oldman's Commissioner Gordon, Morgan Freeman's Lucius Fox) is lent an

Scraped Crusader: "The Dark Knight Rises" and "Red Stroke"

Written by Mike Schulz
Saturday, 21 July 2012 12:03

almost startling depth of feeling by the sublime actors inhabiting the roles. Astonishingly for a second sequel, none of the returnees appears to be merely going through the motions, and Caine, in particular, comes through with some of his finest, most moving work in years.

Yet how does one pick a legitimate favorite actor here when also confronted with Hathaway, whose delectably inscrutable vixen keeps you forever guessing about her motivations and whose sardonic wit routinely (and blessedly) lightens the movie's spirit? Or Joseph Gordon-Levitt, whose beautifully modulated turn suggests the aching struggle in remaining a decent person in an indecent world? Or Marion Cotillard, whose soulful talents and incomparable screen charisma are quickly causing me, and most everyone I know, to run out of superlatives? It features its share of disappointments, but *The Dark Knight Rises* is, all in all, a triumphant closer for a trilogy that has definitely earned one. During a TV-news broadcast late in the film, an anchorman refers to Gotham as "our greatest city," and it seems like the perfect moniker for the locale of our greatest comic-book-movie series.



RED STROKE

Costing roughly, I dunno, a *zillionth* of *The Dark Knight Rises*' budget – actually around \$500 – area filmmaker Joseph Boyle's 54-minute

Red Stroke

will be screened at Rock Island's District Theatre on July 27, and having seen the movie, I'd like to think that Wally Pfister himself would be astonished by how much photographic acuity and panache half a grand can buy. (At least if Boyle is there to do the buying.) Filmed in South Korea and performed entirely in Korean (with English subtitles), this short dramatic thriller finds a young mathematician seeking retribution for an unintentional wrong perpetrated on his wife, and it's a visually exemplary piece of work. Serving as

Red Stroke

's cinematographer (as well as its director, producer, writer, editor, co-sound editor ...), Boyle is alert to the beauty in such seemingly mundane sights as steam from a coffee cup or a pant leg ruffling against a breeze, and his nighttime scenes, with the Korean streets illuminated by the gorgeous pop of fluorescent signs, are fantastically well-composed. You could literally eat off of Boyle's pristinely lit images here – the film has none of the home-movie scruffiness and blurriness associated with most ultra-low-budget efforts – and

Scraped Crusader: "The Dark Knight Rises" and "Red Stroke"

Written by Mike Schulz
Saturday, 21 July 2012 12:03

Red Stroke

's impressive look is matched by its sound, with Devin Kirby-Hansen and Adam Hurlburt providing a mesmerizing, enjoyably insistent drum-and-synth-heavy score. Boyle's central theme of accident versus cause-and-effect is delivered with perhaps too heavy a hand and presented with too many unlikely coincidences, and his writing here generally leans toward the over-explicit; lines such as "This should've been her salvation, but now it will be your damnation" really only work when cackled by costumed nutjobs in comic books. But Boyle elicits deft performances by June Young Lee, Chan Hyok Kim, and the lovely, grave Hyo Jung Yoon, and he's wonderfully shrewd about the incremental delivery of information, withholding the details behind a particular narrative thread until the exact moment you need them.

Red Stroke

is definitely worth a view and so, I'm guessing, will be future offerings by Joseph Boyle; anyone who can make an oversize crab in a restaurant aquarium look not just delicious but damned near

empathetic

is clearly a talent to watch. (

Red Stroke

plays at the District Theatre – 1611 Second Avenue, Rock Island – at 7 p.m. on Friday, July 27. Tickets are \$10, and for more information on

Red Stroke

, visit

JosephBoyleFilms.com

.)

Follow Mike on Twitter at [Twitter.com/MikeSchulzNow](https://twitter.com/MikeSchulzNow).