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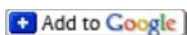
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Escape from New York (Blu-ray)

[MGM](#) // R // August 3, 2010 // Region A

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Review by [Ryan Keefer](#) | posted August 13, 2010 | [E-mail the Author](#) | [Start a Discussion](#)

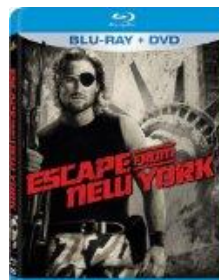
The Movie:

Coming up on its 30th anniversary, there's something about *Escape From New York* now, even after the many "guy movies" that have been released since, which keeps it head and shoulders above the rest. Maybe it's the concept, about roaming a not-too-distant future version of Manhattan with the country's baddest criminals. Maybe it's the cast and crew of the picture, who portrayed a badass-edness with a wink that let you know it wasn't too serious. But whatever the reason, it has a devoted core audience that puts it at the top of a short list of cult films to watch on a Saturday night.

John Carpenter ([The Thing](#)) co-wrote the screenplay and directed the film. The story is easy to follow: Manhattan is now a prison island, cordoned off by a wall around the boundaries, where criminals are exiled because of the high crime rate. Air Force One goes down over the island, carrying the President (Donald Pleasence, [Halloween](#)). The police commissioner, Hawk (Lee Van Cleef, [The Good, the Bad and The Ugly](#)) looks for ways to get the President out, but he finds a different proposition when Snake Plissken (Kurt Russell, [Tombstone](#)) arrives. Hawk offers a deal to Snake; get the President and the valuable classified information he's holding, and get a pardon for his crime, which was breaking into the Federal Reserve. Snake has some reservations but goes through with it, even with Hawk hedging his bet by injecting Snake with a time-released explosive in his system.



Snake uses a glider to land on the World Trade Center and soon runs into Brain (Harry Dean Stanton, [Big Love](#)), an old running buddy of Snake's and knows who's hiding the President and where



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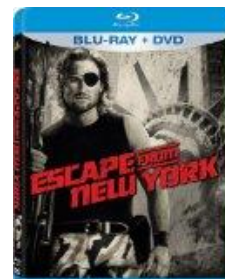
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he might be. Brain helps Snake find "The Duke" (Isaac Hayes, [South Park](#)), only to betray him and leave him for dead. Snake has to escape...from New York...with the President before both men's times run out.

If there's a message to be gleaned from *Escape From New York* I can't find it, but the journey that Snake takes through Manhattan is a fun one. The Duke's gang features lots of people with lavish cars and weapons, commandeering once-valued property as homes. And yet, the viewer notices a harmless anarchy among those in Manhattan. I mean, where are these guys going to go? There's also the thrilling possibility of an open sandbox environment. While Snake is dropped into a slightly limited scenario, the rules are open to his interpretation and doing. Snake was doing *Grand Theft Auto* before Rockstar ever thought of it, yo!

Most importantly, Snake is a cool dude in a post-apocalyptic James Bond kind of way. He fires guns cool, he rescues the President cool, he even fights Duke's large thug in a third-act battle cool. Brain has a girlfriend named Maggie, played by Adrienne Barbeau ([Back to School](#)). Maggie is no slouch in the looks department, but one look from Snake Plissken and I have no doubt she got pregnant from it.



It's because that, with Carpenter's unique vision, *Escape From New York* is less about the journey and more about the character on it. It's why that it's still fun after all these years, and why so many films that try to use the same general formula for a film have failed. Carpenter and Russell make it work both because of the imagination and because they don't take themselves seriously, and do both to the nth degree. Despite its age, *Escape From New York* still remains a fun Saturday night movie, and anyone who sees it should make no apologies.



**The Blu-ray Disc:
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AVC codec in all its 2.35:1 high-definition glory. I've seen parts of the film from time to time on the HD channels at home and was impressed, and the Blu-ray really illustrates the clarity and detail that's brought out in the image. You can notice things like small ponds of water in city streets shimmering in the city lights, and finer detail in hair and clothing texture. There appears to be some minor moments of DNR in the image, but not persistent and obtrusive enough to distract the viewer. All in all it's a solid transfer.

The Sound:

The DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1 surround lossless track is a nice surprise. When a helicopter flies by (or even when Snake's glider comes into Manhattan) there's some subtle speaker panning that occurs, and even some directional sound effects when people dart behind Snake as he first arrives on the island. I could have sworn that my subwoofer picked up the slightest hint of low end during Snake's landing too. Considering that this film didn't get the chance to use Dolby sound like some more mainstream films of its time, I wasn't expecting a revelation on Blu-ray, but it does the job.

Extras:

A second disc with a standard definition copy and a trailer. That's it. Nothing from the ([2003 Special Edition](#)) is brought over here. Fox continues to bungle the releasing of MGM catalog titles and neglects the consumer. Brilliant.



Final Thoughts:

Well if you're a fan of *Escape From New York* and want the best possible presentation, the inclusion of that SD makes double-dipping tough. Hopefully it doesn't and you'll hold onto your Special Edition, but people who don't have a copy of the film on any disc yet should probably grab this. Regardless of the decision, let's give Fox a collective kick in the arse for dropping the ball on this release.

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