



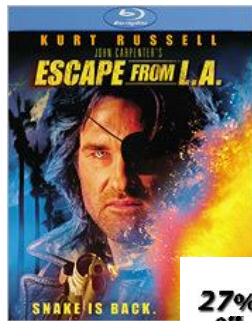
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Disc Details



27% off

Technical Specs

Blu-ray
BD-50 Dual-Layer Disc

Video Resolution/Codec

1080p/AVC MPEG-4

Aspect Ratio(s)

2.35:1

Audio Formats

English: Dolby TrueHD 5.1
Spanish: Dolby Digital 5.1
French: Dolby Digital 5.1

Subtitles/Captions

English SDH
English
Spanish
French

Supplements

Theatrical trailer

Escape from L.A. (Blu-ray)

Paramount / 1996 / 100 Minutes / Rated R
Street Date: May 04, 2010

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Offer Details

List Price: \$29.99
Amazon Price: **\$21.99 (27%)**
3rd Party Price: \$20.25
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Overall Grade

★★★★★

(click linked text below to jump to related section of the review)

The Movie Itself ★★★★★

HD Video Quality ★★★★★

HD Audio Quality ★★★★★

Supplements ★★★★★

High-Def Extras ★★★★★

Bottom Line Buyer Beware

Reviewed by Michael S. Palmer
Thursday, May 06, 2010

Introduction

The Movie Itself: Our Reviewer's Take

Snake is back.

Fifteen years after he escaped from New York, the ultimate anti-hero, Snake Plissken, returned for another (unnecessary) impossible mission. The year is 2013. The United States has become a fascist dictatorship after the President predicted a cataclysmic earthquake. Los Angeles is now an island prison for all deemed unworthy to be U.S. citizens. When the President's daughter steals the Black Box, a vital piece of technology that controls a worldwide weapon system, and disappears into the ruins of Los Angeles, the government is left with no other option...

Bomb the island to prevent the technology from being used by a Che Guevara look-a-like?

Don't be dim. They're going to send in a one man army to save the day.

Oh, right. Snake! I bet it's because he saved the President last time and is a hero.

Actually, he's an even bigger criminal now for some reasons involving the city of Cleveland and a transvestite named Hershey.

So, despite having a fascist police army, to save the entire country, the government must send in the one man no one trusts?

Exactly! But to get him to do it, they inject him with a virus so he'll get sick and die if he doesn't do the job. It's actually a smart ticking clock, since he gets sicker and sicker as the film progresses, and it hampers his progress to retrieve the vital technology.

Wait, that seems like a terrible idea if you actually want this guy to save the country...

So, as I was saying, Snake goes in alone to retrieve the black box, surviving a bunch of obstacles in the process. He has a motorcycle and car chase (sounds exciting) that seems to be filmed at about seven miles-per-hour (d'oh). Then he visits the L.A. Coliseum, which is filled with post-apocalyptic gladiators (cool!) who are forced to play basketball (Um...). And he surfs a tidal wave with Peter Fonda (Wow!) to race Steve Buscemi's Cadillac (come on!).

Logic and story issues aside, I must admit I was super excited for 'Escape from L.A.' in 1996. Only after reviewing this film did I remember this excitement was primarily because White Zombie was headlining the film's soundtrack. Kurt Russell is actually very good as Snake Plissken -- a quiet, don't-F-with-me badass with a witty bite. He and his co-stars (Steve Buscemi and Bruce Campbell) do admirably, though the world around them fails completely. Clearly the filmmakers had tons of ambition for their story, but sadly they didn't have the budget. Save for a few models and live action special effects, everything looks fake thanks to very

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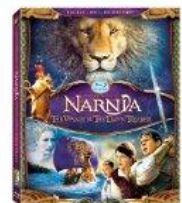
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cartoon-like CGI. The VFX actually look worse than the 1981 'Escape from New York,' which just goes to show you newer doesn't always equal better (Editor's Note: Or that my theory is correct, and John Carpenter went insane in the early mid-80s). Perhaps these issues wouldn't exist if the film had been more contained. Lastly, much like the computer graphics involved, John Carpenter's music is directly related to the 1981 film. So, if you like simple synthesizer scores (with a tinge of wild west), then you're in for a treat. For my ears, it made the film seem much older than it was.

Overall, Snake's great, but the movie is not. To be fair, there *are* some better moments. Making fun of Los Angeles' entertainment and plastic surgery industries is a highlight. And the ending, which I won't spoil here, is the pretty kick ass. But 'Escape from L.A.' isn't worth the time spent watching it, not even as a B-movie matinee.

The Blu-ray: Vital Disc Stats

The 50GB dual layer, Blu-ray disc is good for Regions A, B, and C. Popping it into your player brings up a Paramount High Definition logo, and then a main menu.

The Video: Sizing Up the Picture

The good news is that this AVC MPEG-4 1080p transfer (2.35:1 aspect ratio) is easily the best 'Escape from L.A.' has looked since its 1996 theatrical release.



Also positive are the deep blacks, popping colors (see Steve Buscemi's car), natural skin tones, and occasional moments where the image is sharp enough to attain a near three dimensional quality.

Sadly though, despite a source that appears to be in decent condition for its age, the overall image-quality of this film is a consistent disappointment. Grain should be expected in a film of this era, but the grain levels themselves are all over the board, even in the same sequences. Banding is apparent as "hot" light sources transition into the deeper blacks. And there are numerous instances of dirt and what seem to be either scratches or minor digital artifacts (it was hard to tell the exact issue). Further reasoning for why the movie ranks as a 2.5 star video review aren't necessarily inherent to the transfer process, but still detract from watching. These include the aforementioned CGI visual effects, and a general lack of focus. Lastly, the film's original use of anamorphic lenses tends to create clear definition in the center of the screen, but towards the frame's edge the images are blurred. At least it wasn't artificially re-sharpened Overall, this is an average transfer of a film that had image quality issues to begin with.

The Audio: Rating the Sound

Not all surround sound tracks need to be swirling hurricanes of audio, but for an action picture, the default 5.1 Dolby TrueHD track featured on 'Escape from L.A.' is pretty middle of the road.



On the upside of the audio's characteristics, we have perfectly clear dialogue. The film's climax also fairs well enough, finally managing to engage underutilized LFE frequencies and the mix's rear channel with a variety of explosions, music, and gunfire. Yet, overall, the movie's use of sound is underwhelming. Most sequences fail to engage either forceful panning effects (it seems like one constant wall of sound from the front three channels), or subtle environmental background noise. Yes, the rears are in use for music and sound effects, but they seem to be mirrors of the front channels, rather than discrete, dynamic entities. Further, when comparing the TrueHD to the lossy Dolby Digital foreign language tracks, save for the problems with dubbing a movie, there didn't seem to be any fidelity upgrade in TrueHD. Both seemed punchie, and compressed.

Paramount also offers French and Spanish Dolby Digital 5.1 soundtracks, and includes English, English SDH, French and Spanish subtitles.

The Supplements: Digging Into the Good Stuff

There is only one special feature on this Blu-ray release, the Theatrical Trailer which is presented in 1080p MPEG-2 in a 2.35:1 aspect ratio and Dolby Digital 5.1.

HD Bonus Content: Any Exclusive Goodies in There?

Aside from the 1080p trailer, there are no HD exclusives on this release.



Easter Eggs

No easter eggs reported for 'Escape from L.A.' yet. Found an egg? Please use our [tips form](#) to let us know, and we'll credit you with the find.

Final Thoughts

Snake Plisskin is a supreme badass anti-hero, and well played here by Kurt Russell as always, but unfortunately, as a film and a Blu-ray, 'Escape from L.A.' is a disappointment. For casual viewers, I do not recommend this disc. For action junkies, it's a rental at best. And for fans of Snake, it's actually a tough call. Added resolution here is a double-edged sword. The movie ranges from sharp to smudged, but with the exception of a couple model-based special effects, the visual effects are cheap, cartoonish and distracting. Buyer beware, 'Escape from L.A.' is being sold "as-is."



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