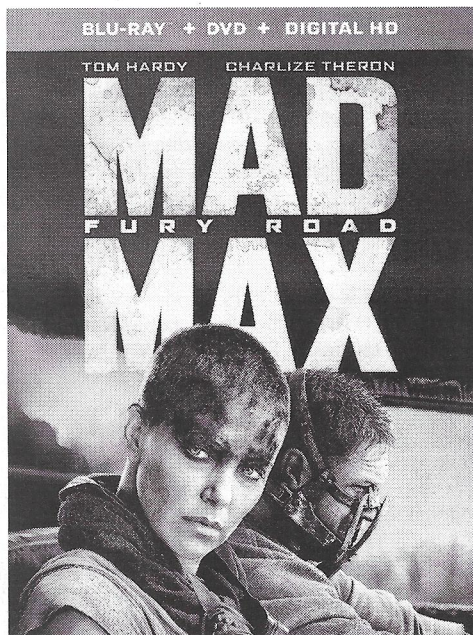


## MAD MAX: FURY ROAD (2015)

8888

D: George Miller. Tom Hardy, Charlize Theron, Nicholas Hoult, Hugh Keays-Byrne, Josh Helman, Richard Carter, Iota. 120 mins. (Warner Home Video) 9/15

We are introduced to a world-weary Max Rockatansky (Hardy) as he is run down by a group of War Boys and taken back to the compound of Immortan Joe (Keays-Byrne), where he is used as a "blood-bag" for the sick. When Joe's right-hand officer Imperator Furiosa (Theron) leaves to trade for gas, it is soon revealed that she is making a break with Joe's wives across the wasteland for the "green place" beyond the sands. The chase is on to capture Furiosa and return the brides. Suicidal War Boy Nux (Hoult) hooks his "blood-bag" Max to his vehicle and races for the glory of death and his place in Valhalla while serving Joe's "worthy cause." Other bands of warriors join in the pursuit, only to have the Bullet Farmer (Carter) grumble, "All this over a family squabble." That is the simple story, but this two-hour chase flick has more on its mind than just smashing cars and rolling over bodies. All the characters are precisely written and grounded in real human emotions and motives. Much has been said about the feminist slant this installment takes, how it steals the show from Max and makes it Furiosa's story. Yes and no. This is as much Furiosa's story as it is Max's, but Max as a character would never evolve into the Max of **The Road Warrior** without having first intersected with Furiosa and the wives. There has been a debate about where this chapter falls within the Mad Max mythos. If Max was "mad" in the first film, he was angry, enraged, mad. He was a man looking for vengeance after losing his closest friends and family. Here, we see a Max who is "mad" as in crazy, insane, still trying to make sense of his world after losing everyone he cared about and the collapse of society around him. He is an animal, running on only a survival instinct to live one more minute. It is only through Furiosa that he regains his vanished humanity. He learns how to care for others again, to have a cause beyond survival. She is powerful and vital to his development, more mother figure than romantic interest. Furiosa is a strong, willful, caring spirit who will never give up, and in her Max finds a reason to live. Life has to be about more than just survival for survival's sake. What his character learns in this installment gives him the capacity to try and help the band of survivors in **The Road Warrior**. Miller is in top form and uses the visual medium of film to tell his story through the action of the vehicles and the expressions of his cast. Dialogue is limited. 80% of the film was created using practical effects and stunts, but CGI was incorporated when even the bravest/most insane of Australia's stunt brigade deemed the copious car flips and



crashes too dangerous to accomplish through old-school techniques. I cannot imagine anyone not enjoying this adrenaline-pumping celebration of action and human spirit. Miller has delivered a new classic that will stand as the high point in action films for a long time to come. Warner's double-disc Blu-ray/DVD/Digital HD set speeds in with multiple behind-the-scenes featurettes covering virtually every phase of production.

Upon Max Rockatansky's glorious return to the wasteland in **Mad Max: Fury Road**, a plethora of past futuristic post-apoc portents received Blu-ray releases. Shout! Factory furnishes a 2-disc extravaganza for John Carpenter's trailblazing jailbreak sci-fi adventure **Escape from New York** (1981), casting NYC as a maximum security prison, Kurt Russell as the always resourceful antihero Snake Plissken, and Lee Van Cleef as the hard-as-nails warden. Blue Underground unleashes a troika of action flicks from Italian workhorse Enzo G. Castellari that include the Carpenter-flavored **1990: The Bronx Warriors** (1982, with Mark Gregory and Vic Morrow), **Escape from the Bronx** (1983, with Gregory and Henry Silva) and the George Miller/**Mad Max**-inspired **The New Barbarians** (1983, aka **Warriors of the Wasteland**, with Fred Williamson and George Eastman). Copious extras include interviews and commentaries. For a trio of budget-conscious **Mad Max** clones, we travel to the Philippines for Roger Corman and Cirio Santiago's **Wheels of Fire** (1984, with Gary Watkins and Laura Banks), **Equalizer 2000** (1986, with Robert Patrick and Richard Norton, presented in an unreleased director's cut) and **The Sisterhood** (1988, with Rebecca Holden and Lynn-Holly Johnson, for the first time uncut). Extras include cast and crew interviews. These Code Red limited-release discs are available exclusively through Screen Archives Entertainment, so don't wait to purchase them. If the future's not exactly bright, it is definitely HD!

—Rob Freese

## QUEEN CRAB (2015) 881/2

D: Brett Piper. Michelle Simone Miller, Kathryn Metz, Ken Van Sant, Danielle Donahue, A.J. DeLucia, Rich Lounello. 81 mins. (Wild Eye Releasing) 9/15

Piper's film is at once charming and embarrassing. The schlock auteur, who has an impressively long list of direct-to-DVD credits on IMDb, was obviously inspired to create **Queen Crab** by Roger Corman's **Attack of the Crab Monsters** (1957) and other AIP cheapies of the 1950s. Based on the **Queen Crab** DVD commentary, it sounds like Piper and company are a close-knit, fun-loving group of friends with a strong appreciation for drive-in cinema. They obviously love what they do, and that gives their film moments of great campy charm. Equally charming is the use of stop-motion animation, that old-school technique, famously employed in the original **King Kong**, wherein the filmmakers create a movable tabletop model of their monster and pose it manually, one frame at a time, in order to create the illusion of actual movement. Stop-motion doesn't look as "real" as CGI, yet it remains for many film buffs a far preferable way to make a monster movie—there's something sweet about it, and Piper's giant mommy crab is actually kinda cute! **Queen Crab** is essentially a tale of a mother's love and of friendship. Melissa (Miller) is a socially awkward loner living in a backwoods town. Her only real friend is a giant crab—and we mean giant—which lives in the lake next to her cabin. Gentle and loving as a rule, Miss Crab goes on a killing spree after a local hick intentionally kills her babies. That's the film's plot. Though the film's special effects are quite good—especially when one considers the ultra-low budget—viewers will have to sit through around 45 minutes of clunky dialogue from actors who run the emotional gamut from A to B. The cast isn't particularly a strong one, though Miller rises above the crowd—she's also seen as her character's mom during the film's pre-credit sequence, where we learn how Miss Crab got so "monstrously" big. **Queen Crab** has one good shock scene: the slaying of the sheriff's deputy is surprisingly brutal—the scene almost feels like it's from another film. If low-budget schlock is your cup of tea, then **Queen Crab** is a feast. If you're looking for a more seriously intended film, you might want to look elsewhere.

—David-Elijah Nahmod

## MONDO SHARKNADO!

In other critter chaos developments, the horror-for-hire team at Asylum Entertainment frees the Syfy sequel **Sharknado 3: Oh Hell No!** (in serious contention for genre title of the year honors), starring Tara Reid, Ian Ziering, David Hasselhoff, Bo Derek and former "Malcolm" Frankie Muniz. Bonus content includes behind-the-scenes featurettes, alternate endings, a special effects exploration, and cast and crew commentary.