

# A jolt of estrogen

**FURIOSA IS EVERY BIT A MAN'S EQUAL WHEN RUBBER HITS THE ROAD IN FRANCHISE REBOOT**

**Mad Max: Fury Road**  
Four stars (out of four)  
Rated: R

Varoom, varoom! Any fears that 30 years of waiting for George Miller's return to his post-apocalyptic Wasteland of "fire and blood" might have been in vain are resoundingly stomped right from the opening engine revs of *Mad Max: Fury Road*.



**PETER HOWELL**  
**MOVIES**

The Aussie writer/director's blockbuster reboot of his 1979-85 action trilogy had its world premiere Thursday at the Cannes Film Festival, immediately prior to its wide release Friday in North America.

With Tom Hardy assuming the Max Rockatansky title role that made Mel Gibson famous, ex-cop turned manic Road Warrior, the story shifts into overdrive without a hitch and with a great deal of kinetic energy.

It's as smooth and commanding a transition as when Daniel Craig became James Bond a decade ago in *Casino Royale*, bringing a more physical and taciturn presence to a well-known character, just as Hardy does with Max.

And Hardy does it while wearing the iron face mask of a prisoner for the first third of the movie, which recalls his ferocious villain Bane, Batman's nemesis, from *The Dark Knight Rises*.

Everything here amazingly feels like a fresh idea, thanks to the addition of Theron in the co-lead role of Furiosa, a female road demon who is every bit Max's equal — and then some — when the rubber hits the road, the fist hits the head and the bullets hit the bull's-



Photo by ADVOCATE news services

**Furiosa (Charlize Theron, right) is the main plot mover as driver of the War Rig, a tanker truck loaded with scarce gas and nitro stolen from Wasteland warlord Immortan Joe, in Mad Max: Fury Road.**

eye. A franchise known for its testosterone appeal suddenly gets a solid jolt of estrogen, from Furiosa and other strong female characters, a true rarity for a movie like this.

Furiosa is also the main plot mover as driver of the War Rig, a tanker truck loaded with scarce gas and nitro stolen from Wasteland warlord Immortan Joe, a skull-masked creep played by Hugh Keays-Byrne, previously seen as the sociopathic villain Toecutter in the original *Mad Max*.

Furiosa is helping five women — played by Rosie Huntington-Whiteley, Riley Keough, Zoe Kravitz, Abbey Lee Kershaw and Courtney Eaton — escape the raping clutches of Joe, who enslaves "wives" as breeders for the male heir he desires. Joe and his skinhead War Boys followers are in hot pursuit and loner Max is forced to ally with Furiosa in the struggle to stay alive in a world where compassion is

rarer than water.

That's really all the plot summary you need, apart from noting that Nicholas Hoult's indefatigable Nux, a War Boy with no greater desire than to die and go to the Valhalla that Joe promises his warriors, makes for an excellent third main character, as his allegiances become complicated.

The beauty of the screenplay by Miller and co-writers Brendan McCarthy and Nico Lathouris is so much of the story is told visually, like silent cinema, and without recourse to whip-lash editing or excessive CGI.

We learn about the characters and their agendas on the run, with barely a moment to process what we're seeing cross the brilliant lens of cinematographer John Seale (*The English Patient*), who came out of retirement to make the golden sands of the film's desert locales (shot mainly in Namibia) seem at once both hell and paradise.

"Don't breathe!" Furiosa barks

to Max at once point, as she uses his shoulder to aim her deadly rifle at an advancing threat.

The audience needs the opposite command. You could use an on-screen reminder to take the occasional gulp of air.

What you don't require is advance viewing of the previous *Mad Max* films. This one stands entirely on its own, although there are many little shout-outs to the past, the main one being Hugh Keays-Byrne's return to the franchise as a different villain than his previous Toecutter, but one every bit as psychopathic and driven.

What you might enjoy, as I did, is a second viewing just take in all the fascinating characters, colours and textures of this thoroughly recreated and revived fantasy world, which now rivals *Star Wars* for the diversity of its mad characters and war machines.

Peter Howell is a syndicated Toronto Star movie critic.

**STORIES FROM PAGE D1**

**MURGATROYD:**  
*Works often slyly playful*

And in 2013, his four-verse choral selection, *Tribute to Red Deer on its 100th Birthday*, was performed at Sunnyside United Church. The work was requested by Sadie Braun for her Red Deer Chamber Singers.

Some of his creative spark came from less lofty sources. The everyday antics of a friend's pet gerbil and yellow cat prompted the ditties *Ode to Tiffany* and Beatles-esque titled *Simon in the Sun With Roses*. Like the furry creatures that inspired them, he said, "they are active pieces, with some quiet parts."

His works range from a few minutes long to a momentous 10 movements (for a lengthy piece commemorating Lacombe's centenary in 1995), and have been played by the Red Deer Symphony Orchestra, Red Deer Roy-

als, the Red Deer College Symphonic Winds, local high school bands and many Central Alberta community orchestras.

Murgatroyd recalled his rousing piece *Entrance Festive* was toured by late Red Deer conductor Keith Mann and his Royals all over Europe.

About a quarter of his compositions have been performed, which Murgatroyd feels is a respectable number for any composer.

Many solo and chamber pieces were written for various musicians who have impressed him over the years. Some were students he met while acting as accompanist at the Red Deer Festival of the Performing Arts (formerly Kiwanis Music Festival). Two years ago, Murgatroyd was honoured by the festival for a half-century of service.

His other recognitions are a Provincial Crowsnest Pass Music Award for Composition (1981), Red Deer and District Allied Arts Council Celebration of the Arts Award (1983), and the Red Deer, Alberta Centennial Award (1967).

Although Murgatroyd takes his composing seriously, his works are often slyly playful.

A friend once presented him with a free ticket to a piano concert that would have cost \$26 for admission. He returned the favour by composing a piece of music that was as long as it would take to pay back the cost of admission at 50 cents for every bar of music written.

"It's called *Fifty Cents a Bar, Plus a Dime*, because I thought at least I could write a piece for him that's worth 50 cents a bar," said Murgatroyd, with a grin.

The composer, who was married briefly and has a daughter who is a lawyer, has also never been afraid of experimentation.

For instance, his short work *Cloud 11*, which was performed by the Red Deer Symphony Orchestra, is based on palindrome. The notes in the first half are played in exactly the reverse order in the second. It's written for an unusual grouping of instruments, including glockenspiel, chimes and gong.

Murgatroyd once wrote a duet for the unusual pairing of a tuba and flute — because why shouldn't a tuba perform with a flute?

Parting ways with convention, he feels, is par for the course for any Canadian composer.

Like the diverse makeup of this country's population, "Canadian music will never be any one thing. It will be many things."

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**RIPPER: Collaborated with Swollen Members**

As Snak the Ripper, he has collaborated with the likes of Swollen Members and the Onyx collective.


If anybody had told the 20-year-old Fyvie that he could make all this happen someday, he said he never would have believed it.

"If any young person listens to my music, what they can take from it is you can do anything you want to do," Fyvie added.

"I'm not an angel. I'm not perfect. ... If I can do it, you can do it."

Tickets to his 10 p.m. show with Caspian and Jaelyn Gee are \$30 in advance, \$35 or \$40 for VIP access from [www.trueability.ca](http://www.trueability.ca).

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