

Sex, Guns, and Monster Trucks

Mark Hartley's *Not Quite Hollywood*

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“Take *Mad Max* as an example,” recounts director Mark Hartley. “On the first day of the shoot, Grant Page, the stunt coordinator, has got the lead actress on the back of his motorcycle on the way to the set. What they were doing the night before, I’ll leave up to your imagination. He’s driving down the road early in the morning, and a semi-trailer is coming towards them. The sun is blaring in the truck driver’s eyes and he doesn’t see them. So Grant has to swerve the bike on its side, and actually go underneath, between the wheels of the semi-trailer to save his life — and before he does that, he looks back and sees that his lead actress has got her head poked up. He elbows her in the face to get her to stick her head down, breaks her nose, they actually slide under the truck to safety, and then the bike comes to a halt and collapses on them and breaks Grant’s leg. And that’s the stuff that happened *off* the set!”

Hartley’s documentary, *Not Quite Hollywood*, careens through the insane heyday of Australian genre films, when sex romps, slasher flicks, and high-octane cinema ruled the drive-ins and broke box-office records. The mile-a-minute celebration of the ’70s and ’80s “Ozploitation” movies is packed with candid, from-the-hip interviews with the directors, producers, and stars of movies like the titillating *Felicity* (1979), the wild-boar gore-fest, *Razorback* (1984), and the unrepentant *Fair Game* (1986), whose heroine is stripped bare and tied to the hood of a roaring monster truck.

“Before the introduction of Australia’s R-certificate (in 1971, the equivalent of our NC-17 rating),” Hartley explains of Australia’s exploitation explosion, “we were supposedly the second most heavily censored country in the world. So when that R-certificate came in, it opened the floodgates, and people could suddenly see forbidden fruit on the screen, and they just flocked to it.” As the phenomenon took hold, up-and-coming stars like Jamie Lee Curtis and established veterans like Stacy Keach, who starred together in the Aussie thriller, *Roadgames* (1981), joined the fray. Curtis and Keach appear in the gleefully ferocious doc to reminisce about their adventure *Down Under*. Also weighing in is die-hard fan of the genre, Quentin Tarantino, whose passionate analysis makes you think twice about dismissing these films — some of which were the most expensive films made in Australia at the time — as trivial.

The legendary Dennis Hopper shows up to confess his sins on the set of *Mad Dog Morgan* (1976). While starring as the violent, unhinged, alcoholic title character, the film’s producer had to bail him out of jail before he even started shooting, and decades later Hopper is still legally banned from driving or riding as a passenger in a car in the city of Victoria. To be fair, though, the entire culture of Ozploitation filmmaking was one of lawlessness. From literally setting principal actors on fire, to allegedly shooting at cast members with live ammunition, to accounts of a full-on scalping on the set of the biker film, *Stone* (1974), these were brutal times.

“We need that person to jump away from that car just before it hits him,” explains Hartley of the philosophy of the era. “Well, if it hits him, we won’t take him to hospital — we’ll give him a can of beer and tell him to stand further away from the car on the second take! There were no rules, but I also like to think that if there had been rules, these guys would have broken them anyway, because it was all about whatever it took to get their twisted vision up there on the screen.”

Not to pigeonhole Australian movies of the era as exclusively exploitative, Hartley’s next doc explores the making of *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975), one of the many art-house classics also produced at the time. But screw manners and graces for now. As Hartley explains it, with clips, trailers, and behind-the-scenes footage from over 80 Australian genre flicks, *Not Quite Hollywood* is “full of laughs, gasps, and a hundred minutes of money shots.” ▼

Not Quite Hollywood drops on DVD October 6.