



# Nick Prescott's Reviews

## **Mission: Impossible Special Edition (DVD)**

Talent: Tom Cruise, Ving Rhames, Jean Reno, Kristin Scott-Thomas, Vanessa Redgrave, Henry Czerny, Emmanuelle Beart, Jon Voight.

Date of review: 4<sup>th</sup> of May, 2006.

Writer/director/editor: Brian De Palma

Classification: M (Mature)

Duration: 110 minutes

We rate it: Four and a half stars.

With the recent big-screen release of the latest entry in the Mission: Impossible franchise, it has been a canny move for the studio to re-release the first of the films in a beautiful 2-disc Special Edition DVD. Brian De Palma, best known as the director of ultra-stylish genre pieces like *Dressed to Kill*, *The Untouchables* and *Scarface*, was an interesting choice to take the reigns for Tom Cruise's first outing as superspy Ethan Hunt.

1996 was when it all began, and, like many audience members, I still can't quite believe it was ten years ago that Mission: Impossible made the leap from TV to the cinema. Brian De Palma was in top form, having just directed Al Pacino in *Carlito's Way*, and Tom Cruise was in the process of grasping the crown as most bankable male lead on the planet. Cruise and his business partner Paula Wagner nurtured the project as producers, and one of the best screenwriters in the business, Robert Towne, was brought on to give the script an edge of true genre beauty. With De Palma in place to direct, a blockbuster with an enviable pedigree was in the making.

Lo and behold, the design paid off; Mission: Impossible deservedly made a fortune at the box-office. A breathlessly-paced action-adventure film that took its audience on a perfectly fashioned thrill-ride, Mission: Impossible did what all good blockbusters set out to do - it entertained its audience without belittling it, and it gave punters a truly thrilling couple of hours in the cinema. Polished, suspenseful and preposterously entertaining, De Palma's film ensured the franchise would stick around for quite a few subsequent instalments.

While it was made in the first few years of CGI (Computer Generated Imagery), at the time De Palma's special effects were astonishing beyond belief. The peeled-off face-masks, the inside-the-Chunnel explosions and helicopter chase, all of the setpieces

that made this film so astonishing to watch are still enormously effective. While digital effects have progressed in leaps and bounds, M:I still looks great.

The plot setup, as always with this kind of film, isn't necessarily too important to keep in mind. In this case, the IMF Agents, headed by Ethan Hunt (Cruise) are assigned the task of tracking down a more-important-than-life-itself piece of information: a list of the true identities of all the ultra-secret agents from the shadowy IMF organization. If the list falls into the wrong hands, we're told, all hell will break loose. Naturally, there is a nemesis in the wings, here played deliciously by none other than Vanessa Redgrave, whose effortless charisma brings an astonishing air of refinement to proceedings. When someone as lovely as Ms. Redgrave is the villain, you know you're going to enjoy the banter.

Cruise is slick and heroic as Hunt, Rhames and Reno are reliably tough and deliver their one-liners with panache, and Beart and Scott-Thomas are lovely foils when the boys get too carried away with themselves. Oh, and the explosions, twists and surprises are pretty damned entertaining too.

This is slick Hollywood entertainment at its most polished and assured. Genre fans will already have seen this film, but the wealth of extra documentary material that has been included on this pristine DVD certainly makes it worth revisiting. For those who have not yet gotten around to experiencing this wonderfully escapist piece, joys await. Mission: Impossible is just the ticket for a cold winter's night at home: it's wild, and impossibly entertaining.

Nick Prescott.