

# M:i:III ??????

This movie was one of my favorite movies for a while. A few years back I watched it with someone who nitpicked all the ways that the movie wasn't realistic, so I was worried that on rewatch I would find that I had given it more credit than it deserved. Maybe it's nostalgia, but I still think this movie is spectacular. It's a masterclass in how to create and sustain tension, while not losing sight of the personal stakes for the protagonist. Even though I knew exactly what was going to happen in each scene, I was still at the edge of my seat, worried for the characters that I already knew would make it to the end. In the last Mission Impossible movie, Ethan Hunt was just an overall cool guy who could handle anything thrown at him. In this movie, he's still ridiculously talented at what he does, but it feels like he's constantly at the edge of his abilities. In the last movie, he gets hit and shrugs it off without it seeming to affect him, but in this movie, you can see him struggle to recover his wits and keep going every time. Tom Cruise's acting sells this, as well as the writing and directing, giving each of these hits its proper weight to make the whole film feel like Ethan Hunt could fail at any given moment, but he doesn't, in large part because his love for his wife is so strong and desperate. Though his wife is the damsel in distress for most of the movie, she does get a solid scene where her choices and brains save Ethan Hunt from certain death. She feels like more of a character than the previous two love interests, even if most of her character traits are in service of their relationship. It's progress. And yes, there's a lot in this movie that is not realistic. Ethan Hunt should have died many times over, and setting up an entire operation in 2 hours feels literally impossible, but if you accept the reality where there's a government agency called "Impossible Mission Force" and suspend disbelief, the movie does have a sense of internal logic that satisfies me. And there's another kind of realism in this movie that helps it feel immersive. The movie was shot on location without a lot of green screen as far as I could tell. Tom Cruise really is running through the streets of Shanghai, and he interacts with real objects in real, physical sets. I've seen too many MCU and Disney CGI fests, so it feels like a breath of fresh air to have no trouble believing that what I'm seeing is at the very least physically possible, if not realistically plausible.

Though I like this movie more than the first Mission: Impossible, I do think it lacks something that the first one had. This one beefs up the action and suspense, and even though I just praised this movie for doing tension very well, I tend to enjoy when movies take their time and give space to breathe. That action replaces a lot of the drama of personal betrayals, double agents, and false identities, which works for this movie in its own way, but still feels like a loss for the character of the Mission: Impossible franchise. It still stays truer to Mission: Impossible than M:i-2 does, but that's not very hard to do. All in all, this is my favorite movie of the franchise. 5 out of 5 stars, I can easily recommend this as one of the top action movies of all time.

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