



Reason and Road Kill

Director Quentin Dupieux challenges the horror genre with *Rubber*

Why would you make an artsy, cult-aspiring pseudo-horror flick about a homicidal tire with a fetish for dark-haired girls and a desire to off anyone in its path through the use of psychokinetic powers? (Yeah, a tire, as in that thing attached to the axle of your car/truck/bike/whatever). The answer: No reason. It is precisely this lack of logic that director Quentin Dupieux — known to electronic music fans as producer Mr. Oizo — brings to the forefront of the movie *Rubber*.

Rubber opens with Lieutenant Chad (Stephen Spinella) immediately breaking the fourth wall, holding a glass of water in the desert and explaining to the audience that all great films have an element of complete arbitrariness to them. In this soliloquy, Spinella cites films that are indeed great, yet he tongue-in-cheek applies the label of arbitrary to portions of those movies that have a deliberate logic to them. Then Spinella pours out the glass of water he never drank from, and the opening credits roll. This conscious decision to highlight the absurd pretty much sets the tone for Dupieux's movie.

Rubber isn't a movie that is supposed to make any sense at all. Halfway through it, I got the feeling it doesn't even really want to be considered good but rather memorable. And in a world where every new shitty horror flick is just another drop in the bloodbath, perhaps memorable is more important than logical or good.

I am by no means knocking the quality of *Rubber* as a work of visual art. The film has moments of stunning cinematography; there are long scenes of the murderous tire cruising through the desert and taking out wildlife as well as soda pop bottles with its, uh, mind. Yeah, so the tire kills its victims by summoning a psychokinetic force that

causes its rubber to tremble and flux until, eventually, said victim explodes. While rabbits and crows and other wildlife simply blow up entirely in bloody and graphic fashion, human victims just get their heads blown off. Yup, exploding heads. Killer tire. Not to ruin it for you, but eventually a killer tricycle makes an appearance also.

Rubber takes its own cinematic self-awareness to another level right from the get-go, as the viewer is introduced to an anonymous cast of viewers. This eclectic mix of people, standing in the middle of a barren desert landscape where the film begins, are given binoculars by a strange facilitator (a gangly looking white man in a suit) who shows up out of nowhere and instructs the viewers to start watching. The viewers watch the killer tire dispatch its victims and respond to one another with a desensitized tone of disbelief.

Then night falls, and these same viewers go to sleep, having been seemingly neglected by their facilitator and left to fend for themselves in the middle of the desert. They wake, hungry, and continue watching the tire kill through their binoculars. At one point in the movie, the suit-wearing facilitator shows up again and tosses them a turkey laced with poison, killing the starving viewers. Only one survives — the one who didn't eat the turkey. Could this be a comment on the passive consumption of movie watchers? An artsy quasi-Dadaist post-grad-school flick trying to make a statement about the nature of viewing horror films? Or just a few more corpses in the desert adding to the body count of an already killtacular tour de force?

Who knows? I don't. But there is definitely reason to go see it. **EW**

Rubber plays one day only, 9:15pm Thursday, May 19, at the Bijou Art Cinemas; for more info visit www.bijou-cinemas.com

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