

# MOVIE OF THE WEEK: Gunpowder Milkshake — revenge served sweet

*By Dan Jensen*

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***An assassin is forced into a situation where she becomes the guardian of a young girl while being pursued by the very agency she works for. [Dan Jensen](#) shares his thoughts on this rather unique action-comedy.***



[GUNPOWDER MILKSHAKE](#) is not your typical action movie, which you might deduce from the rather bizarre title. It's the story of an assassin, abandoned by her mother at 12, who goes rogue after a simple hit mission turns into a much more complex situation where she's forced to take care of a girl aged eight ("*and three quarters!*") while the bad guys seek to take revenge.

Sure, the plot might sound like it treads on familiar action movie turf, but there are many

ways in which it manages to feel fresh.

The film was written and directed by Israeli filmmaker [Navot Papushado](#) and stars a mostly female cast including [Karen Gillan](#), [Lena Headey](#), [Michelle Yeoh](#), [Angela Bassett](#), [Carla Gugino](#) and [Paul Giamatti](#). While there might be some out there who feel that Hollywood is going "woke" with all these female-led action films coming out lately, good on them for giving women a chance to do something they're more than capable of.

In the lead role of Sam, Karen Gillan ([Guardians of the Galaxy](#) and the recent [Jumanji](#) films) was perfectly cast as a woman who is bitter against the world for having been abandoned but can also defend herself by turning whatever happens to be lying about the room into a weapon. Gillan is great at playing stoic and here she does it convincingly while letting moments of tender vulnerability slip through when needed.

But as great as she was on screen, the real highlight was seeing Yeoh, Bassett and Gugino together as former accomplices of Sam's mother (Headey) come together as a formidable team in a finale that will make action fans grin.

Admittedly, the film started off a little slow and took a few scenes to get used to the world we were being presented with, but once it draws you in, it's easy to remain hooked.

Papushado's visual style is intriguing, using a

lot of symmetrical camera framing and almost always moving the camera to add energy to his scenes. Even in dialogue scenes where the characters aren't moving, the camera often is. It's a great technique to keep a viewer engaged, and Papushado does it well.

Visually, *Gunpowder Milkshake* is nothing short of stunning, with several scenes bathed in neon light and colour, production design that makes every location feel real with great attention to detail and the crafting of a world that feels both unique and plausible. There's always a lot to look at on the screen in any given frame.

In terms of the action scenes, this movie is most definitely not for the squeamish. It's violent. I mean really, *really* violent. Heads roll, limbs break and the blood flows. But it's that over-the-top movie violence that makes audiences chuckle out of mild shock. The film has been compared heavily to the [John Wick](#) series and I think that's justified. Here, we have a scenario where an assassin organisation exists with its own set of rules and locations that are friendly to its members. But it also borrows from the films of [Quentin Tarantino](#) (dialogue), [Edgar Wright](#) (editing and style) and [Robert Rodriguez](#) (creativity).

This last comparison was where the movie stood out from many other action movies in that the fight scenes were so imaginative and brilliantly choreographed. There are some truly creative (and often comedic) moments in the way that Sam has to take down her opponents, especially in one scene where her arms no longer function. Not only that, a lot of times the camera is wide enough to really see what's going on with minimal fast cuts.

And the incredible score by [Frank Ilfman](#) is worth mentioning as well. It was another element that really made *Gunpowder Milkshake* feel unique by adding a French accordion in parts all the way to going full spaghetti western in some scenes. It was every bit as eccentric as the movie's title

(which does have relevance once you watch it).

All that being said, the movie could have benefitted from having a slightly shorter run time than the nearly two hours it stands at. There was a moment it felt the film was going to end before the 20-minute coda, but it's not a huge gripe. It also does suffer a little at times from having a lot of parts moving at once with several plot threads woven into the narrative.

By the time the credits roll, you'll be left wanting to see more and anticipating news of the inevitable sequel when it's announced.

***Gunpowder Milkshake is now showing in cinemas around Australia.***

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