



It's been two days since I have seen it, and I still can't believe that I'm about to give a positive review to a movie from the Fast and Furious franchise.

This is a movie that stars Paul Walker, for God's sake, and "actor" who, if any less talented, would be a member of the Kardashian family. But why take my word for it? As Chris Hutchinson so eloquently explained in a recent [The Browns Outsider](#) article: *"anytime Paul Walker: The Actor speaks one of those English lines, it has all the emotional range and delivery brilliance of a desk lamp. And not one of those cute Pixar lamps either"*.

The movie also stars Vin Diesel and the actor formerly known as The Rock, Dwayne Johnson, who are in a heated competition if the Oscars ever come up with a "Best Use of Steroids" category; three women who are basically interchangeable in the "Hot Looking Brunette Who

Really Needs To EAT SOMETHING!!!!" Department"; and a variety of other painfully obvious stereotypes.

Add to this some absolutely terrible writing, a ridiculous caper, boring villains right out of "bad action movie central casting" and completely implausible action sequences; and that leaves you with...

A move that was a lot of fun to watch, and a perfect kick off to the summer blockbuster season, especially given how horrible and uninteresting the movies have been so far in 2011.

It works because it doesn't take itself too seriously. The movie; the writers; the director; the actors...hell, even the cars don't take themselves that seriously. After all, it's mostly just an opportunity for Chrysler to get some serious product placement for their Chargers, which do really look good down there in Rio de Janeiro, even if you can probably count on one hand the actual number of 2011 Chrysler products in the entire country of Brazil.

It's all just one big excuse to have a two hour car chase, interrupted by the occasional fist fight, gun fight, and girls in bikinis shots.

The insanity kicks off at the start, as they continue the "final" scene from 2009's "Fast & Furious", with the prison bus carrying Dom Toretto having to swerve to avoid the fast cars chasing it, and then doing at least seven barrel rolls before coming to a stop with a roof that's as caved in as Michael Cera's chest. A minute later, we learn from the newcast that "no one was hurt, and all prisoners were recovered except one".

OK, I like that. Let's just throw it out there right off the bat that this is all one big fantasy and go

from there. This continues in the next scene as Dom, his sister Mia (Jordana Brewster) and former FBI agent Brian O'Conner (Walker) are stealing some fancy cars off a fast moving train in Brazil and loading them onto what appears to be the world's fastest monster tow-truck. Remember when we were kids, and we'd crash our Matchbox and Hot Wheels cars into each other, or fly them off the table to the ground? Nothing ever happened to those indestructible suckers, did they? Well, that's the same concept here, where a sports car can fly ten feet down off a train that's going 70 mph, and not end up with a scratch.

Suffice to say, our boys (and girls) are in way over their heads, running from a corrupt business man and a Javert level US federal agent (Johnson) and his team also trying to track them down. Do our heroes use the window of time they are given to make their escape? Of course not...it's time for a caper!

The movie then turns into a non-thinking man's version of "The Italian Job"...without the Mini Coopers (or, sadly, Charlize Theron). Dom and Brian bring in experts from different fields in order to pull off a heist of what seems to be the entire national debt of Argentina. To do so only requires them to defeat the entire corrupt police force of Rio de Janeiro, a billionaire's private army, and the Rock's scary looking biceps. No problem.

On the positive side, director Justin Lin NEVER let's anyone concentrate on the gaping holes in the plot for long, as he moves quickly from one outrageous action scene to the next. This is Lin's strong suit, as he showed in the last two Fast and Furious movies, and he doubles down on the action in this film, totaling more cars than an entire NASCAR season.

It's all totally predictable and totally fun. In truth, I'm finding that I'm really enjoying these types of films as they have received a bit of a renaissance over the past year or so. "The A-Team", "The Expendables", "Unstoppable", "Red"...all of these are in the same line, and a polar opposite of action films featuring dour characters who spend most of their time in internal anguish (like most superhero movies and anything from such notable hacks as Michael Bay and Roland Emmerich).

I think it's a sign of the times. We as a country have gone through a lot since the Great Recession started in 2008. Don't get me wrong, there is still a place for heavy, introverted films such as "The Black Swan" or "Winter's Bone"...

But that place isn't the summer...especially considering how crappy the winter was for most of the country. We want our fun and our escapism, and that's what "Fast Five" delivers in spades.

My Rating – Frank Ryan (3 footballs)