

The Bard said it best in *Henry VI, Part II*, "The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers!" For this act, we'll substitute lawyers with movie critics. I doubt anyone will mourn. In the spirit of Jefferson, I declare my independence from them and state that I shall not read another review ever again.

The modern movie critics have become disconnected and apathetic to the wants of the 21st-century audience. They have become the 1% that sent the French into a furor and brought Marie Antoinette to the guillotine. Case in point: *Furious 7*. I have seen the articles condemning the latest installment of the *Fast and Furious* franchise. The titles were eye-catching, spurious distractions, reeling in the unsuspecting. The articles, themselves, have done everything from outright trashing *Furious 7* for being escapist and calling for the demise of the franchise itself.

Don't we go to the movies to...well...escape? See my point? Ignoring the defamation and seeing the film for myself, I'm ready to start the revolution. Start your engines!

*Furious 7* might better be titled *Furious Evolution*, as this is exactly what the film does. In light of the tragic loss of Paul Walker, the franchise, this film, the story, and the characters had no choice but to evolve. If the movie critics (those smarmy 1% courtesans) had any real connection to real people, they might understand why this may well be the best film of the franchise. My fellow Furies, a.k.a. the fans, who have been there from the beginning and those who joined the race along the way, had an opportunity to watch the film deliver frills, chills and thrills like never before in this no-holds barred, high-octane quarter mile. In a 130 minutes, the audience had *The Avengers*, *Mission Impossible*, and *Star Wars* all on one IMAX screen and with fast cars! If the Imperial Empire had pilots with these skills, the Rebellion would have been crushed in the era of the first Death Star!

Vin Diesel and crew deliver once again, despite a catastrophic series of events, both on screen and off. For detractors who call the film a 130-minute montage to Paul Walker, clearly you have not been paying attention. Moreover, you are not Furies like the rest of us in the 99%. The film was a montage to everyone and everything (even the cars) that has made these movies iconic.

The lump in my throat began with Letty and Dom returning to *Race Wars*, reminding us how this all began. Complete with Dom's Gandalfian wisdom on the quarter mile and Letty unleashing her fist on familiar faces, the audience was taken on an emotional trip down Memory Lane. Like a Lamborghini Diablo SV with a bad suspension, our collective heart is driven down a familiar road, experiencing every scenic turn and every painful bump, and we go willingly.

I have to wonder if modern-day movie critics even know how a good story works. It seems simple to me: relationships. Move the heart, and the mind and body will follow. Read some Thoreau, movie critics, it's not a new concept. *Furious 7* reminds us how Brian O'Connor and Mia Toretto met. Crappy sandwiches at a family-owned pitstop. It's certainly no mistake that Dom Toretto wields a wrench in his hands as he battles Deckard Shaw, played by Jason Statham. The Furies know this recurring motif well. The wrench was the tool of choice that sent Dom to prison when he assaulted a man.

Just when the audience is ready to roll on with the thunder of the action, we are yanked back into our seats with reminders of where we have been with our favorite family of gearheads and how very far we have come. Unlike super-hero movies with super characters, among them a billionaire, a god, and human experiments (one that went right and one that didn't), we can relate to this cast of characters: a mechanic, a glib ex-con, a techie, a cop, and the fabulous array of strong women who love them and keep them anchored (I'm talking about the cars...just kidding!).

After 15 years, the players are more etched into their characters than ever before with on-point performances by the returning cast. Sung Kang, who played the ever unflappable Han,

was sadly absent from the team for obvious reasons. Not sadly, Sean Boswell, played by Lucas Black, got no more than fifteen minutes. There is a God! Even Michelle Rodriguez redeems herself. The acting lessons have paid off as she actually acts her way through the film rather than snarling like a rabid cat. Maybe some life coaching lessons will do her well off-camera. Good luck with that.

Deus ex machina. It means god from the machine. Leave it to the Greeks to invent great audience experience. I know the movie critics can pronounce it, but I am not certain they understand how it works for the 99%. Deus ex machina are those moments in the story where it's all over for the heroes. Lights out. Call the undertaker. Plant the daisies. And then, the impossible happens. *Furious 7* delivers, on cue, and always at the best moment, keeping the audience literally on the edge of their seats. (Yes, quite literally. I sat in the back and watched them.)

While the covert theme of *Furious 7* was to say or not say goodbye to Paul Walker, the overt message is one that has permeated every moment of the franchise since its inception: mi familia...family. Enough said.

So here endeth the lesson, movie critics. I shall not waste another moment with you, no matter how catchy your article titles are. You are dead to me. I am a Fury, one of the original ride or die fans, who could not get enough of this series. I'm not ready for the checkered flag to fall on this franchise. Hit the pedal!