

The year that was: the hard men

 By [Charles Siboto](#)

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Now that we're reaching the end of January my brain is finally accepting that it's a new year and I don't put down 2012 at the end of everything I have to date anymore. This, of course, means that it's as good a time as any to look back at the year that was and smile at how many great movies were released (it truly was a great 2012 at the movies) and to look forward to what 2013's going to look like in terms of cinema.

I rediscovered how much fun action is in 2012 in the form of *The Expendables 2*. Having seen Daniel Craig running around in *Skyfall* three times now (he runs a lot in that movie) and trawling the interwebs for images and trailers for this year's *Man of Steel* has got me thinking about 2012's "hard" men in cinema and who we should be on the lookout for this year. A lot of good action-orientated movies made it to the big screen last year and we've had the chance to see many leading men kick villains in the head or being kicked by villains in the head, but who's the hardest of them all? Be a good sport and let me be your ghost of action past, present and future. Let's take a look, shall we, in no particular order.

Almost all of the hard men from the golden age



We have to start with the old-school guys in *The Expendables 2*. This movie rounds up almost all of the hard men from the golden age of action movies and just for kicks and punches puts them in one movie. The outstanding tough-as-nails guy in this feature is without a doubt Jean-Claude Van Damme. The guy is 52 and still pulls off that split roundhouse kick that only he does (in every single movie) and whilst being awesome it just makes everyone in the world feel awkward. He plays the villain aptly named, Jean Vilain because, you know, the names in *The Expendables 2* are very creative. His villainy is less menacing and more comedic. Don't get me wrong though, Mr Villain will kill you and then pose to put his sunglasses on before walking away. The thick accent he has in the movie just adds to the high level of kick-assery. I have to give a nod to Jason Statham as Lee Christmas in the feature. Statham embodies the image of a hard man and you don't want to get into a fist, knife or gun fight with him. It's common knowledge that Chuck Norris is the

hardest man alive and his character as Booker, even though quite peripheral, makes quite an impression: he works alone, has an awesome intro in which he blows up a tank and proceeds to tell a Chuck Norris joke. You don't get harder than Chuck Norris telling a Chuck Norris Joke.

Mark Ruffalo's "enormous, green rage monster" surprised me by stealing the spotlight in *The Avengers*. The Hulk has always been very difficult to translate from comic book pages onto the big screen. Both of Marvel's 2003 (*Hulk*) and 2008 (*The Incredible Hulk*) attempts at this feat didn't work out in a manner they or we would've liked. Eric Bana (*Troy*) and Edward Norton (*Fight Club*) did a good job pulling off Bruce Banner, but the monster itself lacked lustre. In *The Avengers*, on the other fist, the Hulk kicks all sorts of ass - Asgardian, human, Chitauri, you name it! He was smashing things and ripping them apart all over the show. The scenes in which he punches Thor and mops the floor (quite literally) with Loki had audiences in stitches. The Hulk is a hard, erm, giant, green thing and we fear his wrath.

A really hands-on, break-your-face sort of villain

Christopher Nolan ended his Batman trilogy on a high note with *The Dark Knight Rises* and the inclusion of a really hands-on, break-your-face sort of villain in the form of Bane was a highlight. You know you're a hard man when you break the Bat. Tom Hardy's portrayal of Bane is brutal and his presence is menacing. In one scene he merely places his hand on a guy's shoulder and asks if he's intimidated yet. God knows I was. Everything about Bane is designed to inspire fear in his foes: his creepy mask, terrifying voice (coupled with his eloquent language usage) and his calculated bone-crunching



fighting style. Bane is one of the best hard villains to appear on-screen in a while. We feared the late Heath Ledger's Joker because he was bat crazy (pun fully intended) and we didn't know what he was going to do, but with Bane you fear the grievous bodily harm he could cause you.

Along with Zack Snyder (300, Watchmen), Christopher Nolan's involvement in Man of Steel (14 June, 2013) has me excited about a Justice League movie in the near future, but that's neither here nor there for now. Superman is literally a hard man but not so much in terms of his reputation for kicking villains in the head. His is the big blue Boy Scout after all, but I hope Henry Cavill (The Immortals) rids the world of this image in his role as the world's greatest hero. Superman is a dangerous man and will break you; ask guys like Darkseid, they know.



I like Daniel Craig's James Bond, especially as he breaks all the Bond traditions. Craig's Bond is dangerous and you had best believe that he will kill you with his bare hands. That guy will run for two hours in a movie to kill you. Bond is a certified hard man (MI6 probably gave him an actual certificate) in Skyfall. Javier Bardem's portrayal of villain, Raoul Silva, on the other hand is very unsettling. He makes your skin crawl and impresses you at the same time. He gets an enthusiastic nod from me.

You might disagree with Thorin Oakenshield (Richard Armitage) as a hard man, but the disenfranchised King Under the Mountain was badass in The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey. When was the last time you saw a dwarf kick so much orc, goblin, warg and troll ass and still find the time to make the ladies swoon? Admit it, the dude's badass and we get to see more from him in the second instalment of The Hobbit this year, titled The Desolation

of Smaug (13 December).

The latest Tarantino



Quentin Tarantino knows how to rile people up whilst entertaining them and his latest flick, Django Unchained does just that. Jamie Foxx as Django and the charming Christoph Waltz as Dr King Schultz are the coolest pair of bounty hunters as they trek through the USA's Deep South in the pursuit of life, liberty and vengeance. Django is angry and the deadly gun skills he acquires from Dr Schultz make white folk who harm innocents quake in fear.

I'm looking forward to a great 2013 filled with loads of action to accompany my cinema-going experience. My eyes are peeled and my ear's on the ground for the following kick-assery: Thor: The Dark World, A Good Day to Die Hard (Yippee Yi-Yay Mother Russia!), Iron Man 3, Star Trek: Into Darkness, The Fast and the Furious 6 (all I can say is Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson), GI Joe: Retaliation (can I say Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson again or was the first time enough?), Pacific Rim, Kick-Ass 2, The Wolverine (oh, yes!) and the

sequel to The Hunger Games, Catching Fire if you must.

Tell me, furry friendlings, are you not entertained by all of that goodness? Of course you are. Have a great 2013 at the movies.

ABOUT CHARLES SIBOTO

Charles Siboto is a delightful, youngish person. He firmly believes that kindness matters and cannot abide people who are asshats.
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