

Dishing out deliverance



Director: Marc Forster,

Starring: Gerard Butler, Michelle Monaghan, Michael Shannon

From the title, we thought Machine Gun Preacher was going to be a great addition to the Grindhouse-esque action/horror exploitation films that have been screeching on to big screens lately (Machete, Hobo with a Shotgun). It isn't. It's something else entirely and we still haven't quite got over the misleading title.

Machine Gun Preacher tells the true story of Sam Childers, an addict and all-round bad guy who finds salvation and then travels to Sudan where he is outraged by the horrors inflicted on the region's non-combative population – especially the children, many of whom are kidnapped by the brutal Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) to become soldiers (or worse) before they reach their teens.

Against advice from more experienced aid workers, Childers establishes an orphanage in the middle of the LRA's territory. Not only does he provide shelter, but he also leads armed missions to retrieve kidnapped children from the clutches of the LRA.

All good, uplifting stuff really. The depiction of the fate of the Sudanese children is extremely distressing, and Childers' by-any-means-necessary approach to rescuing the vulnerable provides good post-movie discussion fodder, but somehow this film doesn't quite hit the mark. Perhaps it's the action scenes with Butler in a bandana with a gun, or the prevailing undertone of condescension that we can't shake off. We're not sure, and the chaotic narrative certainly doesn't help. Don't expect too much and you won't be disappointed.

Genre: Action | Crime

Age Restriction: R

Runtime: 129 min