

= Donnie Darko : The Director 's Cut =

Donnie Darko : The Director 's Cut is a 2004 extended version of Richard Kelly 's directorial debut , Donnie Darko . A critical success but a commercial failure when first released in 2001 , Donnie Darko grew in popularity through word @-@ of @-@ mouth due to strong DVD sales and regular midnight screenings across the United States . As a result of this growth , Kelly was approached by Bob Berney , president of the distributor Newmarket Films , who suggested that the film be rereleased . Kelly proposed producing a director 's cut , and was given \$ 290 @,@ 000 to create what he called his interpretation of the original film . Donnie Darko was subsequently described as being the first " flop " to be given a director 's cut .

Kelly made various alterations to create the director 's cut . Almost all of the deleted scenes that had previously been included as bonus features on the film 's DVD were added , which increased the runtime by twenty minutes . Kelly also superimposed text from the in @-@ universe book The Philosophy of Time Travel , providing an explanation for some of the more ambiguous elements of the film 's plot . Additionally , the sound quality was improved , digital effects were added , and a new soundtrack was created using songs for which Kelly had previously been unable to obtain the rights ? for the opening scene , " The Killing Moon " by Echo & the Bunnymen was replaced with " Never Tear Us Apart " by INXS . The new cut made its premiere on May 29 , 2004 , at a sold @-@ out screening during the Seattle International Film Festival .

Critical reception to Donnie Darko : The Director 's Cut was initially positive : review aggregator Rotten Tomatoes gave the film a rating of 91 % based on 43 reviews , while Metacritic awarded a score of 88 out of 100 , indicating " universal acclaim " . Roger Ebert gave the film three stars out of four , describing it as " alive , original and exciting " . Retrospective reviews have been more negative , with reviewers criticizing the new soundtrack and the plot 's lack of ambiguity . The film was released on DVD on February 15 , 2005 , and on Blu @-@ ray four years later . Domestically , Donnie Darko : The Director 's Cut took a total of \$ 1 @.@ 3 million at the box office .

= = Background = =

Initially struggling to find financial backing for Donnie Darko in Hollywood , director Richard Kelly spent a year and a half pitching the project to executives . After reading the script , Drew Barrymore agreed to finance the film through her production company Flower Films . Following Barrymore 's involvement , Kelly was able to hire several well @-@ known actors ? such as Patrick Swayze , Mary McDonnell and Katharine Ross ? and to produce the film for a budget of \$ 4 @.@ 5 million . On January 19 , 2001 , Donnie Darko made its premiere at the Sundance Film Festival . Despite the film receiving considerable acclaim from critics , distributors felt daunted and were unsure of what could be done with it . With its genre @-@ bending themes and complex plot , it was described as " inaccessible " and " not marketable " . After several months it was close to going directly to home video , but was eventually picked up by Newmarket Films and received a wide release on October 26 , 2001 .

Commercially , Donnie Darko performed poorly at first . Released only a month after the September 11 attacks in New York , audiences did not respond well to the film 's dark mood or jet engine plot point . Against its budget of \$ 4 @.@ 5 million , the film made only \$ 110 @,@ 000 in its first weekend in limited release at 58 screens . By the end of 2001 it had taken \$ 420 @,@ 000 at the box office ; on completing its theatrical run , it had made a total of \$ 515 @,@ 375 . Consequently , the film had its international release date pushed back by a year , and was not released in the UK until October 25 , 2002 . In this market , the film became a minor hit , making £ 1 million at the box office and being named the second best film of the year on BBC Two 's Film 2002 programme . Michael Andrews 's cover of " Mad World " by Tears for Fears ? used in the film 's final sequence ? topped the UK Singles Chart in December 2003 and became a Christmas number one .

As a result , in part , of its success overseas , Donnie Darko gained a new life in the US and developed a cult following . Its DVD was a best @-@ seller on Amazon.com with sales reaching \$ 10 million , and it was regularly shown at midnight screenings across the country . At Visions Bar

Noir in Washington D.C. , the film was screened for over a year , while at the Pioneer Theater in the East Village , Manhattan , the film played for a consecutive 28 months in a series of midnight showings . At one such event at the Pioneer in late 2003 , Kelly was in attendance , and was approached by Bob Berney , president of Newmarket Films , who suggested that the film could benefit from a rerelease . Kelly had always wanted to do a director 's cut of the film , and proposed this to Berney ; he went on to describe it as a " win @-@ win situation for everyone " . Kelly was subsequently given \$ 290 @, @ 000 to create a new cut of Donnie Darko , which he called his interpretation of the film . Given the film 's box office performance , it was described as being the first " flop " to be given a director 's cut .

= = Changes = =

When originally editing Donnie Darko in 2001 , Kelly was required to keep the final film shorter than two hours , with its final runtime coming to 113 minutes . With more freedom in 2004 , his director 's cut is twenty minutes longer than the original release . Most of the deleted scenes that had been included as extras on the Donnie Darko DVD were added to narrative , bringing the runtime to a total of 133 minutes . Such scenes include additional sequences with Donnie and his parents , Donnie 's therapist Dr Thurman telling him that his drugs are placebos , and his English teacher Karen Pomfrey teaching Watership Down to her class . Close @-@ up shots of Donnie 's eyeballs were included , as well as footage of waves crashing on a beach , and a scene in which Donnie and Gretchen play the 1986 arcade game Out Run .

Alongside the deleted scenes , Kelly also superimposed pages from the fictional book The Philosophy of Time Travel , which had previously been available on the film 's official website , onto the film . Kelly had written these passages after he had finished shooting , and explained that their inclusion was to help the film " operate on a more logical , fluid level , a bit more as the science fiction film that [he] always intended it to be " . The text introduces new concepts that had previously been unmentioned in the original release . According to The Philosophy of Time Travel , much of the film 's plot take place in an unstable " Tangent Universe " , a duplicate of the " Primary Universe " from which Donnie originates . Donnie is described as being the " Living Receiver " , and is granted superpowers such as strength , telekinesis and premonition . Donnie 's task over the course of the film is to return the jet engine (called the " Artifact " in the book) to the Primary Universe to avert a disaster . During his quest , he is aided by " The Manipulated Living " and " The Manipulated Dead " , who are the other characters in the film . These plot points received criticism from reviewers , who objected to the narrative 's new lack of ambiguity . Jonathan Dean of Total Film described them as " unsatisfactory " and " handholding " . In an interview , Kelly stated that the pages had been created " as an exercise in interpretation " , and that they were not necessarily intended to be viewed as canon .

The film 's sound quality was improved and its soundtrack revised . Kelly had originally wanted to use the songs " Never Tear Us Apart " by INXS and " West End Girls " by the Pet Shop Boys during the opening scene of Donnie cycling home and Sparkle Motion 's dance at the talent show respectively , but financial constraints meant that he instead had to use " The Killing Moon " by Echo & the Bunnymen and " Notorious " by Duran Duran . For the director 's cut , Kelly was able to gain the rights to use " Never Tear Us Apart " for the opening scene , and moved " The Killing Moon " to later in the film ; " Notorious " was not moved from the talent show scene .

= = Release = =

= = = Box office = = =

Donnie Darko : The Director 's Cut made its world premiere at a sold @-@ out screening on May 29 , 2004 , during the Seattle International Film Festival , where it was described as an " unprecedented experiment " . To test the reaction to the film , Newmarket then opened it exclusively

in eight further theaters in the Seattle / Tacoma area . Seattle was chosen for this run to see if it could perform well in the suburbs . Six weeks after this test run , the film was released in New York City and Los Angeles , then in eight more cities that summer . It received a wide release on August 27 , three months after its Seattle premiere . Domestically , Donnie Darko : The Director 's Cut took a total of \$ 1 @. @ 3 million at the US box office .

= = = Critical reception = = =

Initial reaction to Donnie Darko : The Director 's Cut was positive . On the review aggregator Rotten Tomatoes , the film has a rating of 91 % , based on 43 reviews , with an average rating of 8 / 10 . At Metacritic , which assigns a normalized rating out of 100 to reviews from critics , the film received an average score of 88 based on 15 reviews , indicating " universal acclaim " . Roger Ebert gave the film three stars out of four , describing it as " alive , original and exciting " . Kevin Thomas of the Los Angeles Times predicted that , as a " richer " cut , the movie would " be ranked as one of the key American films of the decade " . Writing for the Chicago Tribune , Robert K. Elder gave the film 3 ½ stars out of 4 , calling it Kelly 's " mind @-@ bending masterwork " . He added : " In his quest to make ' Darko ' more accessible , Kelly might upset a few loyalists of the original , but there are still enough questions left to confound and enthrall audiences in ' Donnie Darko 's ' reconfigured version . " In an otherwise positive review , Dennis Lim of The Village Voice criticized the superimposed shots of The Philosophy of Time Travel , stating that they " [diminished] the narrative 's mystery and [disrupted] its somnambulist tempo " .

Retrospective reviews of the film have been more negative . In 2014 , David Sims of The Wire listed Donnie Darko : The Director 's Cut in his list of " directors ' cuts messed up their own movies " . Sims disliked the lack of ambiguity in Kelly 's new version , and argued that " crowbarring [a very specific plot thread] into his director 's cut made for a lesser movie " . Similarly , Tom Hawking of Flavorwire felt that the director 's cut ruined the " enduring ambiguity " of the original . Hawking included Donnie Darko : The Director 's Cut in his 2010 list of " 10 director 's cuts that are worse than the original " . Writing in Collider.com for a review of the 10 @-@ year anniversary Blu @-@ ray , Scott Wampler said that he felt " let @-@ down " by the director 's cut , and that it was " right in line with the sort of choices [Kelly has] made as a filmmaker since releasing Donnie Darko " . In the Total Film book The 100 Greatest Movies of All Time , where the original cut of Donnie Darko was listed at number 87 , Jonathan Dean also criticized this loss of ambiguity , remarking : " Unwisely building concrete bypasses over gossamer plot strands , [the director 's cut] steers us through a spaghetti junction of possible meanings when all we really want to do is get lost . " In a 2016 retrospective review , Germain Lussler of io9 stated that the director 's cut " simply isn 't as good " and " feels less magical " . He argued that the inclusion of The Philosophy of Time Travel " prevent the film from being a text that the viewer could read into whatever they wanted " .

The new soundtrack received considerable criticism , with several commentators bemoaning the decision to replace " The Killing Moon " with " Never Tear Us Apart " for the opening sequence . Wampler felt that the song " didn 't fit nearly as well " , while Sims described it as being " horribly mismatched " . Ashe Cantrel of Film School Rejects echoed this sentiment , and argued that the soundtrack " got turned into kind of a pile of crap " ; Shaun Munro of WhatCulture.com similarly felt that " replacing the music is a crime " . In an interview with the British music magazine NME , Ian McCulloch ? the lead singer of Echo & the Bunnymen ? branded Kelly a " knobhead " for making the change .

= = = Home media = = =

Donnie Darko : The Director 's Cut was released on DVD on February 15 , 2005 in both single and double @-@ disc versions ; the latter was available in a standard DVD case or in a limited edition lenticular slipcase . Most additional features are exclusive to the two @-@ DVD set , such as an audio commentary with Kelly and director Kevin Smith , excerpts from the Donnie Darko storyboard , a 52 @-@ minute production diary with commentary by director of photography Steven Poster ,

featurettes # 1 Fan : A Darkometary and They Made Me Do it Too ? The Cult of Donnie Darko , and the film 's theatrical trailer .

As a promotional giveaway , a single @-@ DVD edition of Donnie Darko : The Director 's Cut was covermounted to the February 19 , 2006 issue of the UK 's The Sunday Times newspaper . The film was released on Blu @-@ ray in February 2009 , and received a 10th anniversary special edition rerelease on July 26 , 2011 .