

# StudioCanal

## Story Coverage

TITLE: ISLE OF MAN  
AUTHOR: Ben Younger  
READER: Oscar Gervet  
DATE READ: 9/14/2023  
DRAFT: 7/20/17  
GENRE: Sports-Drama-Romance  
Subbed To : Aaron Ensweiler  
Subbed By : Elazar Fine

### Evacuation scores (Excellent / Good / Fair / Poor)

PREMISE: Good  
PLOT: Fair  
CHARACTERS: Good  
DIALOGUE: Good

### Recommendation (Recommend / Consider / Pass)

STORY: Pass  
WRITER: Consider

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### LOGLINE:

A 42-year-old former motorcycle racer with nothing to lose comes to the Isle of Man, an island in the Irish Sea, to participate in the TT, a public rural motorcycle race known as the oldest and most dangerous in motorcycle history.

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### COMMENTS:

ISLE OF MAN is a motorcycle racing film with a strong romance story. While the script has a captivating world and premise, it falls short of fully utilizing its racing potential. The romance dominates the narrative, leaving the racing elements feeling somewhat anticlimactic and underdeveloped in comparison to other racing films like CARS, RUSH, or FORD v FERRARI.

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### SYNOPSIS:

COLIN McMILLAN (42), a weathered-looking Irish-American (primarily American), comes on a ferry to the Isle of Man, an island on the Irish sea, to watch the TT Mountain Course, a public rural road motorcycle race. There, Colin meets MALCOLM, a rider, and his wife's friend, KATHLEEN. The race starts with excitement until a RIDER falls off his

bike and Malcolm crashes into him. One of the bikes is on fire, burning in the middle of the road. Everyone goes silent. Malcolm and the other rider are dead.

After the tragedy, Colin talks with Kathleen. She is sick and tired that this happens every year, and riders all still come back to race every year. Colin and Kathleen unexpectedly have sex in the back of her car, but she followingly feels awkward and leaves abruptly. Colin is disappointed as he likes Kathleen and wants more than a one-night stand.

FLASHBACK: Colin lives in Asheville, North Carolina, with his daughter MELISSA (MEL, 15). Mel is a huge nerd but recently became aware of her attractiveness and how to use it. Colin struggles to be a single dad, and Mel finds him over-protective. He doesn't let her go scuba diving. We discover Colin used to be a talented rider when he was younger.

PRESENT: In the Isle of Man, Colin calls his friend FISH (40s), a black mechanic back in Asheville. Colin reveals he is quitting his administrative job at an insurance company to stay in the Isle of Man. Fish understands why and warns Colin that people die racing there; four racers died this past week. Colin knows but doesn't care. He asks Fish to sell everything he has: his truck, bike, stands, trailer, and genny, all for Colin to get enough money for a new bike, parts, and a built motor. Fish sells Colin's belongings, and the latter gets his new bike, but he is a rusty rider.

Colin finds a job at a farm on the Isle of Man working for JON MCCOWLEY (late 60's) and his younger brother PETER MCCOWLEY (60's). Colin cleans the barn during this first day. At night, he drinks at the pub and calls Kathleen (again), leaving a voicemail to say he's staying longer and would like to see her again. Later in the night, Colin makes out with a DRUNK GIRL in the pub's bathrooms before getting into a fight with a jealous MAN in the bar. Colin gets knocked out. He wakes up in the hospital with Kathleen stitching his head. She is a physician's assistant and is mad that Colin made out with this girl. She rejects his offer for a coffee.

FLASHBACK: Mel drives her father's car, a 1981 GTV6. Mel smiles ear to ear while Colin looks at his daughter as much as he does the road.

PRESENT: Colin learns the circuit of the TT motorcycle race by riding through it every day on his way to the farmhouse. Later, Colin goes to see Kathleen and manages to make her laugh. They bond, and he shares that he is a single dad, revealing that his wife passed away long ago. Kathleen asks Colin why he came here, but she already knows the answer: the race. She tells Colin that if he's going to race and "came here to die," he got the "wrong woman."

Colin gets stopped by police officer KEVIN FENDER (50) for speeding on his bike. Fender reveals that he is giving Colin a summon because it takes three years to learn the course, and he doesn't want to see Colin killed. The next day, Colin is riding to work when ANOTHER BIKE comes flying past him. Colin immediately gives chase and tries to keep up. But he rides on a hump in the road at 160mph, sails through the air, and slams into the curb. Colin passes out.

Kathleen is going about her day at the hospital when the doors to the ambulance bay slam open. Colin is pushed in on a gurney by two EMTs. Kathleen wants to call Melissa to let her know her dad got into an accident, but they cannot find a number for her. During her search, Kathleen learns something about Melissa that saddens her deeply.

FLASHBACK: Colin is at the hospital in a panic. A DOCTOR reveals *she* is dead, while a COP adds that a drunk driver hit *her*, crossing the double yellow four times over the limit. From the audience's perspective, it could be Colin's wife but they could also be talking about Melissa.

PRESENT: Colin wakes up in the hospital with Kathleen caring for him. She is sad but she hides it. Colin broke three ribs, punctured his lung, shattered his heel, chipped his pelvis, and lacerated his kidney. We see a montage of Colin getting better at the hospital: in bed eating, sleeping, staring out the window, FaceTiming with Fish, and Kathleen sitting with him at night, reading to him. Jon comes for the first time at the hospital to aggressively tell Colin to stop riding, but Colin asks him to leave.

Colin comes home to his apartment on the Isle of Man. Meanwhile, Kathleen checks Colin's bike that Jon retrieved and discovers it was not set up correctly. As Colin gets better, he returns to work at the farm, but when a cow gives birth, both the cow and its baby die. Colin feels guilty and cries deeply, fully.

FLASHBACK: Colin lets Mel go to scuba dive weekend with friends, but he worries and wants her to call him every day. She loves him and tells him to ride his motorcycle to feel better.

PRESENT: Colin discovers a beautiful old motorcycle from the mid-60s in Jon's shed. Jon was a rider and used to race. Colin questions him, and Jon reveals that he stopped racing when Kathleen's dad — an excellent rider and Jon's close friend — died in a race, hitting the wall. Later, Colin confronts Kathleen about not telling him about her dad's death, and Kathleen gets mad that he hid his daughter's death from her.

Later, in Kathleen's car, Kathleen understands that Colin quit racing to raise Mel alone after her mother left them. Kathleen and Colin have sex together in the back of Kathleen's car for the second time.

The next day, Colin is back to riding fast on the circuit, but a COP ON A BIKE pulls out behind him and flips the lights. Colin makes a split-second decision and gasses it! The cop is after him, but Colin manages to create some distance and find refuge at Kathleen's home, where there is only her mother, MEREDITH (who does not like Colin). The cop knocks on the door, and Meredith reluctantly covers for Colin. The cop is Fender and unexpectedly gives Meredith a riding tip to share with Colin to "carry more speed."

Later, Kathleen argues with Colin, who still wants to race the TT course. She doesn't want him to get hurt, but he still wants to do it and gets Fish to come to help. Fish meets Jon and Peter, who form Colin's mechanics team for the race.

Finally, the official race training starts with TWO ANNOUNCERS commenting on all races, an excited public, and dozens of riders. Colin starts this first training race without the support of Kathleen. He is fast, but he is also too confident and sometimes sloppy. He does not want the mechanics to change pieces, only to fuel the bike to save time. Colin's over-confidence leads him to make mistakes after mistakes. Meanwhile, Meredith convinces her daughter Kathleen to support Colin because she sees she is in love with him.

At night, Colin is angry about his performance and scared about the next day. Kathleen argues with him because she is scared for him. Colin says he is doing what his daughter would have wanted him to do, but Kathleen argues that if he's going to race, he must do it for himself because he loves it; otherwise, he'll kill himself. Colin understands that she is right.

On the following training day, Colin races because he loves it and does his best lap ever (by 28 seconds more fast). Colin is in 14th place on the practice sheets and is being talked about on the radio. But on the last lap, he crashes to avoid a cat on the road. Kathleen is worried sick, but thankfully, Colin is well; only the bike is destroyed.

The next day is the official race, and JOHN MCGUINNESS, the previous year's TT winner, lends a bike to Colin. As Colin is overthinking the circuit, Jon advises him to let it go, "close the book and just ride." Colin starts in a mediocre fashion, 35 seconds slower than the day before. But at a mechanic break, Kathleen reminds him why he is riding: he loves it. With this new mentality in mind, Colin breaks the all-time lap record! But Colin hurts his leg on a bump in the last lap. Despite the pain, Colin finishes the race as fast as possible and, against all expectations, ends in third place!

At night, Colin celebrates at the farm. Later, he finds Kathleen in Jon's shed. She is fixing his old bike. As they talk, Colin understands that she's been secretly fixing his bike all along, which helped him ride. He stares at her with a mix of awe and love.

## THOUGHTS:

ISLE OF MAN feels like CARS but with motorcycles, in live-action, and with more emphasis on the romance story. The script is well written and has an enticing premise and world: a public motorcycle race on an Island known as the oldest and most dangerous race in motorcycle history! However, the story feels like a romance-driven sports biopic (though it's not a biopic) failing to fully exploit its unique racing world's potential.

While the TT race is real, the character and story of Colin McMillan are fictitious from my online research. This enables complete freedom to exploit the possibilities of the world of motorcycle racing. However, the script primarily focuses on Colin's tumultuous relationship with Kathleen. While this romance is well-written and character-driven, it completely takes over the story and dialogue until the end of the third act, in which we finally see some racing for longer than half a page.

But even when we do get to this exciting racing in the third act, it feels a bit anticlimactic because the story did not set up any other racers besides Colin, nor Colin's relationship with those riders (all there is is a few mentions of the best riders and John McGuiness lending a bike to Colin). Thus, the other riders feel mostly like interchangeable people, numbers for Colin to overtake in the race. There is no external tension about who is behind or in front of Colin; the race is currently just about time, numbers, and Colin's internal struggle.

The current script may rightfully aim to reach both men and women via the motorcycling racing and the character-driven romance. However, the racing currently feels underwhelming compared to major racing film, including CARS, RUSH, or FORD v FERRARI. In all the aforementioned films, antagonist racers are instrumental in the drama of the races. In ISLE OF MAN, the character-driven romance might move some movie goers, but audiences going in to see a gripping racing film may be disappointed.

That being said, the themes of living life fully, even if this means taking risks, and doing things through love instead of textbook knowledge, are well-developed, and the ending feels cathartic despite the lackluster racing.

There could be a tighter and more exciting version of this with more racing (both in screentime and intensity, and earlier on) and more development of other riders and related conflicts with Colin. Ultimately, despite its well-written character-driven romance, the current story and plot feel a bit too predictable with underwhelming races and thus I recommend to PASS. However, the script is well written and the writer should be considered.

## COMPS:

### **CARS**

Budget: **\$120 000 000**

Opening weekend: \$60 119 509

Gross (US & Canada): \$244 082 982

Gross (World): **\$461 991 867**

Directors: John Lasseter, Joe Ranft

Writers: John Lasseter, Joe Ranft, Jorgen Klubien, Dan Fogelman, Kiel Murray, Phil Lorin

Production Company: Pixar Animation Studios

Distribution Company: Buena Vista Pictures (owned by Disney)

### **RUSH**

Budget: **\$38 000 000**

Opening weekend: \$187 289

Gross (US & Canada): \$26 947 624

Gross (World): **\$96 983 009**

Directors: Ron Howard

Writers: Peter Morgan

Production Company: Exclusive Media Group  
Distribution Company: Universal Pictures

**FORD V FERRARI**

Budget: **\$97 600 000**

Opening weekend: \$31 474 958

Gross (US & Canada): \$117 624 357

Gross (World): **\$225 508 210**

Directors: James Mangold

Writers: Jez Butterworth, John-Henry Butterworth, Jason Keller

Production Company: Chernin Entertainment

Distribution Company: Twentieth Century Fox