

Rise and shine

Christopher Nolan's Batman trilogy has a fittingly epic conclusion. By Stephen A Russell

★★★★

THE DARK KNIGHT RISES (M)

When: Now showing

Where: On general release

Fans have been frothing at the mouth for the third and final instalment of Christopher Nolan's triumphant reboot of the Batman franchise since 2008's stunning *Dark Knight*. Heath Ledger's terrifying turn as the Joker created a rock solid foil for Christian Bale's caped crusader, with the tragedy of Aaron Eckhart's Harvey Dent almost Shakespearean.

Picking up eight years later, *The Dark Knight Rises* revisits Bruce Wayne as a Howard Hughes-like recluse. Batman is a forgotten fugitive, having taken the fall for Dent's supposed murder in order to keep hope alive for Gotham's citizens.

Unfortunately for the early retirement plan, a shadowy warlord known only as Bane comes to Gotham, forcing its leaders to pay for the city's sins. As he beats Gotham into spectacular submission, a reluctant Bruce is compelled to don the mantle of the bat once more.

TDKR is undoubtedly epic. Stunning set pieces ramp up the CGI and the violent fight scenes, while crowd pleasing cameos and plot twists a plenty (even if most are



telegraphed) ensure a heart-stopping ride. New leads include Nolan favourites Joseph Gordon-Levitt and Marion Cotillard as heroic cop John Blake and savvy businesswoman Miranda Tate – the latter is particularly impressive.

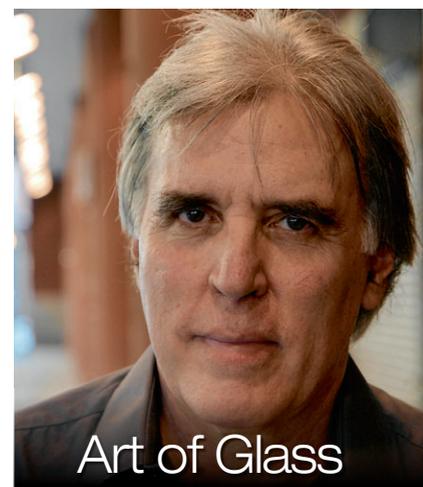
Anne Hathaway's ambiguous super-thief Selina Kyle/Catwoman has a tough act to follow in Michelle Pfeiffer from Tim Burton's *Batman Returns*, but is just about sassy enough, while Gordon-Levitt brings a relatable human touch to the film.

Gary Oldmans' Commissioner Gordon and Michael Caine's Alfred are both forced into muddy moral quandaries adding meat to the broth.

As the central villain, Tom Hardy's Bane is disastrous. Ruined by dreadful vocals that sound like a camp Darth Vader, his scenes are almost unbearable, easily trounced by Ledger's force of chaos.

Thankfully he has less screen time than you might imagine, with shadowy forces at play. Bale too has less to do here, but nails every scene, with the stakes raised to nuclear.

If there were any justice in the world, Bats would thoroughly trounce *The Avengers*, even with the Bane handicap. This is a superior movie in almost every way, but the bat lives in the shadows after all.



Art of Glass

THE QATSI TRILOGY

Where: The Arts Centre, Hamer Hall

When: July 31–August 2

Bookings: visit artscentre.melbourne.com.au or call 1300 182 183

As part of the Philip Glass Ensemble, conductor and musician Michael Riesman (pictured) has a three-fold challenge for *The Qatsi Trilogy*. Over three nights, he will conduct the 12-member ensemble, play keyboards and keep the music in time with the visionary films that make up filmmaker Godfrey Reggio's *Qatsi* trilogy. "I'm not using any artificial means to keep the music in sync, I'm not using a computer or anything," says Riesman. "Nothing is pre-recorded or sequenced. It's all done by me simply watching the screen and looking for markers – like a scene or an action that has a definite sound." Riesman marks the music to a fraction of a second. "I'm following the score, playing the music and looking at the screen," he says. "I'm usually never 100 per cent perfect, but I'm very, very close. I'm a tiny fraction of a second behind, then I have to speed it up, but it's not in a way that is perceptible to the listener."

As the long-time collaborator of legendary American composer Philip Glass, Riesman has worked on countless film scores, including *The Hours* and *The Truman Show*. In the 1980s, they decided to adapt the three Qatsi films – *Koyaanisqatsi*, *Powaqqatsi* and *Naqoyqatsi* – into a live concert experience, which has its Melbourne premiere next week.

"Five or six years after the first film, we realised we could do it live and we had the technology to do that," he says.

The two composers' musical union has now spanned 38 years; Riesman had just finished university when he auditioned for the Philip Glass Ensemble in 1974. "I just started out playing keyboard but since then, as Philip started writing more complicated music – *Einstein On The Beach*, *The Qatsi Trilogy*, *Glassworks* – all of these needed someone to be a music director and conductor and I was ready to fill that role."

– Angela Allan

The lord of the rings



While knocking back stubbies to celebrate Australia's historic win in the America's Cup in 1983, then Prime Minister Bob Hawke famously declared: "Any boss who sacks anyone for not turning up today is a bum."

Chances are Julia Gillard won't offer the same leniency next week, but that won't stop tens of thousands of Australians showing up bleary eyed and weary to work after late nights on the couch watching the London Olympics.

The brutal time difference means the opening ceremony kicks off at 5.30am our time on Saturday. Screening on Nine and in high definition on GEM, it will feature performances by Robbie Williams and Paul McCartney and the procession of participating teams.

Nine will produce more than 370 hours of television, with a minimum of 14.5 hours of

London content a day. Karl Stefanovic, Ken Sutcliffe and Mark Nicholas will be the main faces of the broadcasts, and the network has taken over more than a dozen commentators, including Giaan Rooney, Andrew Gaze and Eddie McGuire.

Things are even more intense over at Foxtel, where the pay-TV provider is offering no less than eight around-the-clock channels – there's even one entirely devoted to equestrian events, fergodsake.

As for Australia's medal hopes, it's debatable whether we'll top our 14 gold and overall sixth place finish from Beijing. But we do have plenty of odds-on hopes like our men's hockey team, the Kookaburras, currently ranked number one in the world, and everyone's favourite redhead Steve Hooker, who pole vaulted his way to an Olympic record four years ago.

If the whole green and gold patriotic thing isn't really for you, you can always settle in to watch some of the world's greatest (non-Australian) athletes; like swimmer Michael Phelps, sprint superstar Usain Bolt and the American men's basketball team.

So if your boss tries to give you a hard time as you struggle through your fifth triple-strength coffee, just refer them to Hawke's infamous words ... and maybe call in sick the next day.

Nine's three-hour special, Let The Games Begin, screens on Thursday from 7pm. The opening ceremony screens from 5.30am on July 28 on Nine and GEM. Coverage on Nine, GEM and Foxtel continues until August 13.