If the words “Judge Dredd” make you think of Sylvester Stallone’s rather misguided movie from the 90s, think again.

Dredd, starring Karl Urban as the eponymous hero, is everything Stallone’s film isn’t: dark, violent, and action-packed. Set in a futuristic metropolis called Megacity One, Dredd takes place in a world where crime and danger are so out of control that police as we know them have been replaced by “judges,” essentially cops authorized to act as judge, jury, and if necessary executioner. Even among this grim brotherhood, Judge Dredd is renowned for his bravery, toughness, and unflinching devotion to the law.

But even Dredd may have bitten off more than he can chew when he and his rookie partner, Anderson (played by Olivia Thirlby, who mixes beauty, innocence, and a hidden toughness wonderfully), invade an entire apartment complex which happens to be ruled by the cruel and ambitious drug czarina Ma-Ma (Lena Headey). Can Dredd and the young Anderson fight their way to the top of Ma-Ma’s fortress and take her out before they are cornered and slaughtered themselves?

Dredd may have the plot of a video game, but it’s the execution that makes the difference. The action is brutal and unflinching, yet the director knows when to back off and let the suspense take root. The film maintains a tense, heavy atmosphere of menace from beginning to end, and everything builds to a powerful catharsis in the shattering climax.

Dredd doesn’t try to sanitize the title character the way Stallone’s movie did. Urban portrays Judge Dredd as the ultimate urban enforcer, a man who may seem cold and even inhuman beneath the battle helmet which he is never glimpsed without, but given the world in which he lives, can a good cop be any other way when confronted with pure, merciless evil each and every day? Judge Dredd may be hard-core, but Urban manages to invest him with a certain nobility that makes him impossible not to root for.

Dredd made its home video debut January 8 and is now available at your local Redbox and other video suppliers. If you love action, I think you will definitely love Dredd.