## 4. The Dark Knight Rises (2012)

The Dark Knight Rises had a tough act to follow in The Dark Knight, and a fair portion of that burden fell on Hardy's performance as the movie's villain, the masked terrorist known as Bane. Forced to act behind a facemask and under the shadow of Heath Ledger's trilogy-defining turn as the Joker in The Dark Knight, Hardy put his own stamp on the series - and, with some bone-crunching combat in the movie's big fight scene, on Christian Bale's Batman.

## 3. The Drop

There have been so many gritty neighborhood crime dramas at this point that narrative twists are few and far between, and the success or failure of a movie like The Drop - directed by Michaĺl R. Roskam from a Dennis Lehane screenplay - rests more heavily on its stars than most. Happily for Roskam, he hit paydirt with his leading men, casting Hardy as a bartender caught up in an organized crime operation run by his cousin (James Gandolfini in his final film performance) and surrounding them with a supporting cast that included Noomi Rapace and Matthias Schoenaerts.





## 2. Locke

It takes place entirely in a moving car, and the camera rarely even leaves his face, yet Locke is as minute-by-minute gripping as any classic action thriller - and none of it would work without the mesmerizing work Hardy delivers in the title role. Starring as a man speeding to a fateful destination while caught between life-altering professional and personal crises, Hardy runs the emotional gamut from pleading to outraged over the course of the movie, and is never less than riveting.

## 1. Mad Max: Fury Road (2015)

Bollywood's franchise hunger has reached the point where any level of cynicism regarding a sequel, reboot, or reimagining is defensible, and given that it had been 30 years since the last Mad Max installment, one could be forgiven for approaching this Hardy-led continuation of the saga with a somewhat jaundiced eye. But all that time away from the franchise clearly gave director/co-writer George Miller plenty of ideas, because Fury Road is that rarest of blockbuster beasts: an action thriller that isn't content to merely string together set pieces. In fact, it's a surprisingly thoughtful film, one whose message is afforded equal importance alongside epic action sequences arranged with balletic, eye-popping grace. Amidst all this, Hardy's Max Rockatansky remains a man of few words - in fact, he spends a good deal of the film with a mask covering his mouth - but alongside co-star Charlize Theron, he grounds the movie's gonzo outbursts with palpable human emotion. "Believe all the hype," cautioned Christy Lemire. "This movie will melt your face off." — www.rottentomatoes.com