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Mel Gibson's 'Hacksaw Ridge' Rivets With 10-Minute Ovation At World Premiere – Venice

After wowing critics at early morning press screenings on Sunday, Mel Gibson's pacifist World War II action drama, *Hacksaw Ridge*, had its red carpet world premiere out of competition at the Venice Film Festival last night. The film played to a roughly 10-minute standing ovation — long standing-Os are not as common a happenstance on the Lido as they are at some other festivals. At about six minutes into the ovation, Gibson and the actors were asked to go down into the audience. Check out the photos from inside the Sala Grande below (outside, some fans greeted Gibson with their faces painted blue, *Braveheart*-style).



In attendance alongside Gibson were stars Andrew Garfield, Vince Vaughn, Hugo Weaving, Teresa Palmer and Luke Bracey as well as co-screenwriter Robert Schenkkan.

Garfield plays Desmond T Doss, the real-life conscientious objector who saved 75 men in Okinawa without ever firing or carrying a gun. The faith-based film and horrors-of-war action drama is about a man who “does something extraordinary and supernatural, really, that inspired me,” Gibson had earlier told the press corps. “A lot of attention needs to be paid to our warriors; they need some love and understanding. I hope this film imparts that message. If it does nothing but that, that’s great,” said Gibson.

This is the first film Gibson has directed in a decade and last night at the gala premiere, he and the actors were “overwhelmed” and “very truly speechless,” I’m told by a person close to the gang. A private dinner followed hosted by *Hacksaw*’s Italian distributors, Andrea Leone and Eagle Pictures.



There were emotional toasts, notably by producer Bill Mechanic who worked for 13 years to bring the project to life. While at Fox, Mechanic worked with Gibson on *Braveheart* and called *Hacksaw* the director’s “greatest film.” One attendee observed, “It was particularly meaningful.” Also at the event were IM Global CEO Stuart Ford and Brian Oliver of Cross Creek Pictures. Principal financiers were Cross Creek, Demarest Films and IM Global who acquired

international rights for about half the film’s \$50M budget and essentially sold out in Berlin last year.

Lionsgate releases *Hacksaw* domestically in the heart of awards season on November 4. Overseas release dates are not yet widely confirmed.