

MOVING PICTURES



Danny Glover (left) and Mel Gibson are back as Martin Riggs in Warner Bros.' sequel "Lethal Weapon 2". L.A. police detectives Roger Murtaugh and Wepon 2.

'Lethal Weapon 2' is on target

About two-thirds of the way through "Lethal Weapon 2" (B +, R, 115 minutes) we find out more than we want to know about our charming but obsessed L.A. detective-sergeants Roger Murtaugh (Danny Glover) and Martin Riggs (Mel Gibson).

I don't want to give away the story so let's see for yourself how screenwriter Jeffrey Boam ("Inner Space," "The Lost Boys" and "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade") goes sappy and simple-minded as the second installment of "Murtaugh and Riggs Go Berserk" lights up your local screen.

For the most part "Lethal Weapon 2" overcomes the faults of its story-line with fast action, good characterizations, witty dialogue and an effective sense of camaraderie between Glover and Gibson, even though some of the dialogue and foreign accents are hard to decipher.

Murtaugh and Riggs' friendship is counterpointed and heightened by Leo Getz (Joe Pesci), a funny little guy, whose protection is our guys' assignment. It seems that Getz has laundered a half-billion dollars of drug money and some of it didn't come clean. In fact, it was so dirty that much of it stuck to Getz's fingers. Now, the mobsters are after him and he's going into the Federal Witness Program and passing through L.A.P.D. in the process.

Pesci projects that certain wonderment of a kid playing cops and robbers with real guns while Glover and Gibson treat him like a brother-some child. It all works very well and some of the film's best moments are the by-play between these three. That, as well as other character development, primarily Murtaugh's family affairs, lifts this buddy film far above the usual and prevents the action from dominating.

THAT'S NOT to say that this is a calm, contemplative detective mystery. Far from it as "Lethal Weapon II" conquers new territory in action-film violence and deeds of daring. Helicopters and maniac Riggs running down L.A. freeways add considerable panache to the car chases obligatory to such films.

The violence is excessive, although that seems acceptable these days, but after a while one's senses are dulled. That happens about the same time that the plot goes bad, but by then we're hooked and have to wait around to see the bad guys get theirs.

The bad guys, by the way, are an interesting political statement in that their leader is a South African diplomat trading in drugs, gold and maybe courtesy of his counselor employees, a bunch of ugly heavies. No match for Murtaugh and Riggs, of course. Murtaugh, in particular, plays the anti-apartheid theme quite well despite its unexpected appearance in a buddy-cop film.

Glover and Gibson, like two tough, violent vigilantes, but they're pleasantly and attractively anti-authority. We can associate with that and we appreciate their aggressive tactics. At some time or other we'd all like to haul off and let the bad guys have



the movies

Dan Greenberg

It, but we don't because we're weak or chicken, or both.

The next best thing is to fantasize along with Glover and Gibson in this entertaining, well-done, fast action film, one that should join this summer's box-office smashes at the top of the charts.

GRADING THE MOVIES

STILL PLAYING

"Batman" (C+) (PG-13) 120 minutes
Michael Keaton is a dud in the title role but Jack Nicholson's Joker is terrific.

"Do the Right Thing" (B+) (R) 120 minutes
Sharp, incisive and entertaining commentary on today's urban America.

"Crusoe" (D+) (PG-13) 100 minutes
The action is as quiet as, well, as a deserted island.

"Dead Poets Society" (A+) (PG) 124 minutes
Sharp, incisive and entertaining commentary on today's urban America.

"Robin Williams' sensitive portrait of a fine teacher is complemented by excellent young actors as his students.

"Earth Girls Are Easy" (PG)
Gena Davis and Jeff Goldblum in sci-fi comedy.

"Field of Dreams" (B+) (PG) 111 minutes
Fanciful baseball story as Iowa farmer builds diamond so Shoeless Joe Jackson can play again.

"Night Night II" (C) (R)
Roddy McDowall in another vampire movie.

"Ghostbusters II" (C) (PG) 102 minutes
It's less funny the second time.

"Great Balls of Fire" (C) (PG-13) 105 minutes
Jerry Lee Lewis is energetic and entertaining but biography is hokey whitewash of a decadent life.

"Bird" (B, R, 181 minutes) is a film you'll like more than you should. But despite its flaws — and there are plenty — it grabs firm hold of your emotions and nostalgia

... and it doesn't let go.

It's not just the sweet sounds of Charlie Parker (Forest Whitaker) — although the sound track is excellent, utilizing original recordings by the Bird and other jazz greats of his era. Not only is the music good, there's lots of it. Well, why not just buy the soundtrack?

Because the film's peculiar, haunting quality evolves from the ways in which award-winning director Clint Eastwood blended those sounds with the images and, as well, from the performances he drew from his principals.

"Bird" is the Charlie Parker story, a sad one indeed, a tale reflecting the burdens of black America in this century — poverty and rejection escaping into drugs, alcohol and, on the bright side, music.

That was Parker's story, but one of the film's major flaws is that the genesis of Parker's problems are largely ignored with only an occasional professional failure thrown in, seemingly for good measure.

But it's hard to accept that terrible pain which drove him so deeply into drugs and alcohol merely on the basis of a brief, impressionistic sequence of black poverty in rural America with which the film opens. Neither is there any real development of his personal, artistic tension.

ALSO MISSING is any realistic depiction of Parker's marriage to a white woman. While the tension of their personal relationship is well-documented, it's hard to believe that such a relationship occasioned no comment in those days — America in the '40s and '50s.

Despite these problems embedded in a filmic structure that is more

jumbled and confusing than artistic and impressionistic, the film grabs you and holds on. Although Director Judd Apatow had conceived this plot structure as a dramatic riff to counterpoint the music, it doesn't play well.

Clearly the sound track is a major reason "Bird" is so effective. It features Parker's solo electronically extracted from original recordings and then combined with newly recorded performances by musicians who played with the Bird — pianist Jay Brown, alto saxman Charles McPherson, bass players Ben Carter and Chuck Donahue, plus trumpeters Jon Faddis and Red Rodney.

Rodney (Michael Zelniker) is featured in some of the film's best sequences, moments characterized by excellent human interaction between men of different races, bonded together by their music and by their pain. To the film's discredit that bond is not sufficiently emphasized or explained as a function of racially divided America.

The film's Oscar last year was for best achievement in sound, clearly well-deserved. Whitaker — Robin Williams' sidkick in "Good Morning Vietnam" and featured in "Platoon" and "The Color of Money" — deserves much credit for a complex rendering of joy intermingled with pain.

WHITAKER's performance won best actor at Cannes, while Diane Venora's characterization of Mrs. Parker (Chan) won the New York Film Critics' best supporting actress. Finally, Eastwood received the Golden Globe Award as best director.

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ALTERNATIVE VIEWING

Film breaks new ground

By John Monaghan
special writer

The Omniflix films at the Detroit Science Center have taken us on space missions, swooping rides by airplane and roller coaster, and into the mouth of an erupting volcano. "Beavers" — the Space Theatre's summer offering — breaks new ground by telling a simple but fascinating story.

The Omniflix concept asks you to relax in comfortable reclining seats and view films in the Space Theatre planetarium. Instead of constellations, a high-resolution film image illuminates the domed ceiling.

Breathtaking wilderness opens the film — great trees and sparkling blue water untouched by man. Then we close in on a pair of beavers, busily nibbling on tender green leaves to an amplified celery-chomping sound. It might not be Orson Welles, but it certainly held a Saturday afternoon audience captivated.

As they quickly deplete the supply

of tasty leaves near the river, the beavers dam the water higher and higher until it reaches deeper into the woods. By film's end, a swooping crane shot is required to fully capture the massive dam.

The filmmakers raised the beaver couple in captivity before setting them loose to live, love, work and dodge predators in the Canadian Rocky Mountains. It took 204 days of continuous film to collect footage for the 31-minute film.

They go to amazing lengths to accurately depict the beaver's life. A camera is actually built into the beaver lodge. An especially harrowing moment shows a bear nipping at a beaver's heels and chasing him into the lodge. "Luckily," says the narrator, "by the time the bear breaks through, the beavers will be long gone."

SPARING US the laborious process of gnawing through the base of tall trees, the film offers several "timber!" shots, one which shows a

leafy tree almost crush a hapless beaver. In winter, the beavers struggle above and below the thickening ice. Eventually they have babies who continue the tradition that their parents have begun.

The focus occasionally turns to the other animals — snakes, frogs, rabbits, owls — that share the mountain neighborhood.

Director Stephen Low was also responsible for "Skyward," a story of mechanical and natural flight and one of the most popular Omniflix films.

"I think wildlife is probably one of the best uses of the Imax camera," Low says. "It lets you be with living things in places you've never been before — it's not to see what it's like to be on a roller coaster which we've been on before anyway."

A simple saga of nature's hardest working animal, "Beavers" displays the narrative power of the Omniflix film process. As the poster outside the theater boasts, it may be "the best damn movie you've ever seen."

SCREEN SCENE

AFTERNOON FILM THEATRE, Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward, Detroit. Call 633-2730 for information. (R)

"Eraserhead" (USA — 1979), 1 p.m. July 11-16. Director David Lynch describes it as "a dream of dark and troubling images," the story of a man's descent into a surreal world based on fear of sexuality and death. You may have your own interpretation after witnessing this popular and disturbing cult film.

EVE/EMERIE, 214 N. Fourth Ave., Detroit, 522-2470. (\$3-\$5 depending on the event)

"8mm Film and Video Festival," July 10-23 (call for specific showtimes). After a brief hiatus last year, the much-benefited event returns. The 8 mm work of Rainer Fassbinder and Kenneth Anger along with experimental cinema from Australia and Italy highlight the event. A special "Drive-In" movie program screens July 10 at Midnight at Elbel Field. Films in competition continue the following week.

FOX THEATRE, 311 Woodward, Detroit. Call 567-7000 for information. (R)

"K...K..." (PG-13) 100 minutes. More gore for Stephen King fans. "Road House" (R) 110 minutes. Cliche, violent and unpleasant Patrick Swayze works with weak acting.

"See No Evil, Hear No Evil" (PG) (R). Richard Pryor and Gene Wilder in comedy about murder.

"Star Trek V: The Final Frontier" (C+) (PG) 100 minutes. Starship Enterprise on collision course with terrible plot structure.

LYONIA MALL CINEMA, 29415 Seven Mile Rd., Detroit. Call 476-1186 for information. (Free)

"The Unbearable Molly Brown" (USA — 1946) 10 a.m. July 11. A backwoods girl becomes the richest woman in Denver in this tawdry adaptation of the hit Broadway musical. Continuing the mall's month-long tribute to Debbie Reynolds.

MICHIGAN THEATRE, 16301 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. For information, call 663-3397. (R) regular and \$2.25 students and senior citizens

"A Fish Called Wanda" (USA-1988), 9 p.m. July 10. Kevin Kline, John Cleese, Jamie Lee Curtis and Michael Palin team in this insane romantic comedy, directed in the style of the darkest of '60s English comedies.

"Daisy Gillespie: a Night in Havana" (USA — 1983) features the great jazz trumpeter captured live in Cuba. It screens through July 12. (Call for show times.)

"New York, New York" (USA-1977) 7 p.m. July 11; 9 p.m. July 12. A popular singer (Liza Minnelli) must decide between love of career or an abusive husband (Robert DeNiro). Martin Scorsese's noble failure — a colorful tribute to Hollywood films of the '40s injected full of the director's trademark alienation and violence.

"Pattes Blanches" (France-1949), 7 p.m. July 13. Everyone has an ulterior motive in this French melodrama, about a woman's infidelity that leads to murder.

"Under the Sun of Satan" (France-1959), July 14-16 (call for showtimes). Gerard Philipe as Father Donissan, the self-doubting priest lost in the modern world. The winner of the 1957 award for Best Film at Cannes, but rarely seen in this country.

"Koyaanisqatsi" (USA — 1983), 8:45 p.m. July 16. An eye-opening blend of images and ideas backed by the music of Philip Glass. Based on the Hopi Indian word for "life out of balance."

REDFORD THEATRE, 17360 Lahser, Detroit. 337-2560. (R)

"Lost Horizon" (USA-1937), 8 p.m. July

14-15. The uncut version of Frank Capra's classic about a group of travelers who accidentally find themselves in a Tibetan paradise. An all-star cast includes Ronald Colman, Jane Wyatt and Thomas Mitchell.

TELEARTS, 1540 Woodward, Detroit. For information, call 953-8690. (\$2 matinee, students and senior citizens, \$2.25 regular)

"Voices of Sarafina" (USA-1988), July 12-16 (call for showtimes). A documentary which intersperses rousing excerpts from the Lincoln Center's production of "Sarafina" and interviews with its young cast. With South African superstar Miriam Makeba.

TOP OF THE PARK, top of the Power Center parking structure, 121 Fletcher, Ann Arbor. Film begins at 9:30 p.m. (Free)

"Gigi" (USA-1958), July 10. In this Oscar-winning musical, a turn-of-the-century French country girl (Leslie Caron) takes Paris by storm.

"Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" (USA — 1953), July 11. Marilyn Monroe and Jane Russell are husband-hungry abroad.

"Jailhouse Rock" (USA-1958), July 13. Elvis at his sunniest, as a jailbird turned rock star. By far the best of the Presley vehicles.

"Hairspray" (USA — 1988), July 14. John Waters' kitschy tribute to a 1960s-based dance show in the early '60s. With Divine as the concern mother.

"Sensations" (USA-1945), July 15. A campy musical of strong together kids, featuring W.C. Fields in his final film appearance.

"Batman" (USA-1966), July 16. The feature-length movie based on the hit TV show concludes the Top of the Park film series.

— John Monaghan

VIDEO VIEWING

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Grading the movies

A+	Top marks — sure to please
A	Close behind — excellent
A-	Still in running for top honors
B+	Pretty good stuff, not perfect
B	Good
B-	Good but notable deficiencies
C+	Just a cut above average
C	Mediocre
C-	Not so hot and slipping fast
D+	The very best of the poor stuff
D	Poor
D-	It doesn't get much worse
F	Truly awful
Z	Reserved for the colossal bad
	No advanced screening

PSYCHOLOGY FOR INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, GROUPS & COUPLES

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