MOVIES Mel Gibson gets his 'Payback' in latest flick

If you're yearning to feel bruised, bloodied, and beaten-up, there's no need to visit the Kronk gym and volunter as a sparring partner for an up-and-coming prizefighter. Instead, check out Mel Gibson's latest reck-em, sock-em flick, 'Pay-back.' By movie's end, you'll probably hurt all over.

In almost avery seene, some wretched deep of humanity gets shot, kicked, punched, whipped, atomped on, stabbed, carved, hammered, ripped, or burnt. For good measure, somebody dies from an overdose of dirty heroin too. Imagine a cinematic carrival

of pain, and you will begin to get a bead on "Paybtack."

Gibson is Porter, a thief who has been double-crossed by his partner-in-crime, Val Resnick, a creepy sort played with just the right roptilian touch by Greg Henry (moviegoers may well rumember his chilling drill bit in "Body Double."). Resnick not only swipes Porter's share of the duo's hoist money, but he also sets things up so that Porter's wife shoots her husband in the back, and leaves him to die. (One memorable close-up involves Resnick grinding out a eigarette in a glistening puddle of Porter's blood.)

But Porter doesn't die. At least, not physically. In a way,

he's as indestructible as Bugs Bunny — though not nearly as roasonable. And ultimately, though it makes an attempt at sepulched humor new and then, this movie is no laughing matter. After he recovers (following some sordid surgery that we witness up-close and personal), back he goes to the scene of the crime, discovering even more reason to see that his brand of justice is carried out.

When he declares that "nice guys always finish last," somehow we just know justice is going to be the vigilante. To say that he is fixated on recovering his share of the heist money at this point, is putting it mildly. Sure, he's going to have to get

past the mob (here called "The Outfit") to do it, and wade through a heap of other human garbage as well. But he's past caring, He's like a machine, programmed to go after that \$70,000, and anybody who gots in his way is going to be oither (1) maimed or (2) dead.

Much of what is wrong with this picture has to do with Gibson's cofnusing, almost-rebotic character. Who is this guy who's autposed to be our her? He's and Dirty Harry Callahan. He's not Martin Riggs of "Lethal Weapon." He's not taxi driver, Travis Bickle. These were violent characters, but at least we know Travis Bickle. These were violent characters, but at least we know enough about them to feel some of their pain. Porter, on the other hand, is not just a flawed individual, he often comes across like he's living a nightmare to which we have no real access. It's tring. Then, it's tiresome. And, liough Gibson struggles manfully with this odd role, eventually, we'd just like to go lie down someplace, very far away from this movie.

we'd just like to go lie down someplace, very far away from this movie.

Director Brian Helgoland (who co-wrote the acript with Terry Hayes) has assembled a supporting cast that deserves stronger showcasing. Just about all of the film's many villains especially make indollble marks. William Devane, leering as only he can, takes a particularly chilling turn as a jackal-like, second-level syndicate boss, James Coburn slithers onto the screon in a brief appearance as another underworld kingpin, and provides some of the film's comic relief. ("Now, that's mean!" he splutters when Gibson's hain-trigger character blows a hole in one of his expensive attaché cases. "That's just mean!") The best of the beastly bunch is Kris Kristoffer-



Rosie in "Payback.

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son who, as the squinty-eyed, raspy-voiced head of The Outfit, is like evil in an expensive suit.

The cold, gray steel and hard edges of a modern-day megalopells serve as an appropriate land-scape for "Payback," enhancing the dark aura of the story Director of photography Ericson Core's grainy imaging adds another harsh and effective

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Scheduled to open Friday, Feb. 5

"SIMPLY ERRESISTIBLE"
Contemporary love story about a woman with a restaurant and a department store executive who fall in love. mant store executive who sail in love, but as strange things begin to happen, the man begins to wonder if there isn't witchcraft involved. Stars Sarah Michelle Geller, Sean Patrick Flanery.

"THE CHILDREN OF HEAVEN"
Tender and moving tale of compassion, determination and deep family love about an impovershed brother and sister in Tehran, Iran.

"RUSHMORE"
Jason Schwartzmen, Bill Murray, and
Clivia Williams star in this coming-of-age
comedy of a high school student who
has tended to everything in school
except the most important concern—
girls.

PAYBACK*

*This remake is based on the book "The Hunter" about a hard-broiled criminal who tracks down his wife and former

friend, who ran off together after double-crossing him, Stars Mei Gibson.

"SIATING PRIVATE RYAN"
Re-release — story based in true events
of six U.S. Army soldiers on assignment
behind enemy lines to save one private. Stars Tom Hanks.

**Executed to open Filday, Feb. 12

EXESAGE IN A BOTTLE
White walking on a beach a journalist finds a bottle containing a love letter from a man to his wife. She falls in love with the letter writer and sets out to find him. Stars Kevin Costnor, Paul Nowman, Robin Wright Penn and John Savage.

"MY MARKE IS JOE"
Exclusively at the Main Art. Heart felt story of the unlikely romance between two very different people. Stors Poter Mullan.

"MY FAVORITE MARTIAN"
An intergalactic comedy based on the classic TV series about an ambitious

reporter who stumbles upon a "mortian' whose spaceship has accidentally crash-landed on Earth. Stars Jeff Danleis, Christopher Lloyd, Elizabeth

touch. Also, this is a film that could have almost been made in black-and-white. Chances are, you'll come away from it remembering only one color: bloody red. Victoria Diaz is a Livonia free lance writer who specializes in movie, book and theater reviews. You can reach her by voice mail at (734) 953-2045, then press 1854.

.

"BLAST FROM THE PAST" Romantic comedy of a typical American family who took refuge in a bomb shelter for three docades. Stars Brendan Fraser, Alicia Silverstone, Sissy Spacok.

Scheduled to open Friday, Feb. 19

Scheduled to open Fiddly, Feb. 19
"OFFICE SPACE"
A frustrated computer programmer and some equally frustrated colleagues hatch a plot which could lead to a very lucrative and early retirement. Stars Jerniter Anniston, Robert Livingston.

Scheduled to open Friday Feb. 26

"ANOTHER DAY IN PARADISE"
A tragic love story set in the world of thieves and heroin addicts in Tulsa, Oktahoma in the 1970s. Stars James Woods and Melanie Griffith.

Weird February inspires arts



"It's still not weird enough for me." Although I'm unsure whether this quote attributed to writer Hunter S.

unsure whether this quote attributed to writer Hunter S. Thompson is something he actually said, I can't think of a cart with seing the work of all months. February is a month that not only varies in length, but in popular pronunciation. When we hear one 'r' or two, we tend to cut each other some slack. After all, it's February.

In keeping with this spirit of workness, plenty of attractions are schoduled throughout the Detroit area and on Detroit Public TVs Backstage Pass program to increase your intake of the unusual.

Theatre Grottesco, which, by

unusual.

Theatre Grottesco, which, by definition, means "outrageous and larger than life," uses in its current touring production a theatrical style known as Buffoonery, which melds humorous elements from comic and traget themes. This weeks engagement of "The Angele Gradie" at Windsor's Capitol Theatre presented the story of a group of odd outcasts who have lived in the subsement of an abandoned building for generations, and the culture clash when they are discovered by a homeless man. Buffoons originated in the European Middle Ages when anyone "different" was banished from soci-

cty. In February of 1999, instead of banishing buffoons, I say we should celebrate them. Theatre Crotteese founder John Flax and company veteran Elizabeth Wiseman offer some fodder in this week's Backstage Pass.

We can always count on the DIA's Betroit Film Theatre to serve up some quirkiness. Curtor Elliot Wilholm recommends "Six String Samural," to be presented Feb. 15.

"Us an American-made postented Feb. 15.

not so sure about June.

Weird Science, an ambitious exhibition which just opened at Cranbrook Educational Community, offers an artistic journey through the often peculiar pursuic of scientific discovery. A collaboration of Cranbrook's art museum and institute of science, the axhibit features the work of four artists, who through such use of specimen jars and a custom-built chicken coop, create a dramatic setting for the study of reptiles and amphiblans, genetic engineering and space travel. Weird Science is a highlight on the Detroit areas winterspring arts calendar, according to Marsha Miro, who takes viewers on a tour of the exhibit.

It has been a half-century

tour of the exhibit.

It has been a half-century since the heyday of the Hastings Street entertainment district, an area off 1-75 near Wayne State University that thrived on such blues artists as John Lee Hooker,

Harmonica Shaw and Uncle Jessie White. They created a recognizable sound that was largely unheralded nationally. There were many artists that came out of the Hastings Street blues era, but, unfortunately, there was no local record label to support them," says Backstoge Pass music producer Ron Pang-born.

born.

"It may have been difficult for these artists to build Detroit's reputation as a center for blues because we're so close to Chicago, which had just about everything going for it in promoting the careers of blues musicians. Places like St. Louis and Momphis had the benefit of established record labels that helpod build a blues tradition for those cities," Pangborn says.

Now, here's the good news. Many of the great artists from flastings Street art still around and performing, and their work will finally be available on a new "Hastings Street are still around into the released later this year on Tolede-based Blue Suit Records.

Records.

Harmonica Shaw, Uncle Jessie and others from Hastings Street and others from Hastings Street share memories and music dur-ing an event at the Monroe Library on February 17, and in our studios on Backstage Pass, airing Sunday, February 7, and ropeated Thursday at 5:30 p.m. and Friday at midnight.

And remember, it's a month when weirdness can strike at any time, so make it a good kind of weird.