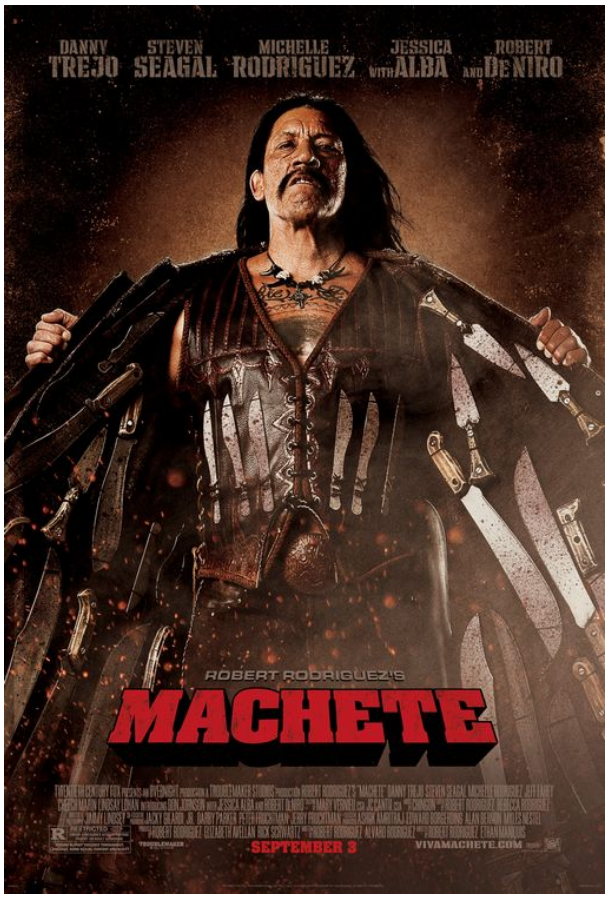

If you really liked the movie “Desperado”, but thought that it needed:

- Less Plot -
- More bloody gore -
- More gratuitous nudity -
- Less emphasis on acting ability -
- A much uglier hero -

Do I have a movie for you!

“Machete” delivers all of these things, and then some.

You want to see an actor once thought as the greatest in his generation selling out for a cartoon role? I give you Robert De Niro as a racist state senator taking pride in being filmed shooting an unarmed illegal immigrant.

You want former “stars” playing characters less fleshed out than DeNiro’s? Say hello to Steven Seagal and Don Johnson competing for the saddest case of “We used to be hot studs, but now we are fat and old.”

You want really hot looking women attracted to possibly the ugliest actor in Hollywood? Feast your eyes on Michelle Rodriguez, Jessica Alba, and Lindsay Lohan all lusting after Danny Trejo.

That’s right…I said Lindsay Lohan, who is basically playing herself; a narcissistic spoiled brat who has to be pulled from a drug lab, has major daddy issues, and convinces her mother to frolic naked with her in a pool in front of a web camera (and they later do a threesome with Trejo…quite possibly the most disturbing part of this entire movie). The only thing I wasn’t able to determine is if Lindsay did her own nude shots or used a body-double…more detailed investigation may be needed.

But so what? None of these issues have anything to do with the point of Robert Rodriguez’s movie; to make a Hispanic version of the Blacksploitaion films of the 1970s. And he does so in such a way as to ensure “Machete” becomes a cult classic. Everything is totally over the top; the violence, the stereotypes, the sex, the pure evilness of the antagonists, the music, the explosions, and especially the political satire.

It is a tricky tightrope Rodriguez is walking here. Illegal immigration has been brought back to the forefront by politicians of all sides in this election year, and after the passage of the tough Arizona law (and the protests that followed), it might be a subject that is too raw and emotional to be brought up in a movie at this time.

Nothing to fear. By the time Rodriguez gets around to actually trying to point out “debates” in the immigration issue, your ability to think clearly has already been beaten to a bloody pulp by the sheer audacity of this film to offend and then to overwhelm the senses. You can’t take this serious as a political statement because there is absolutely nothing in this film that closely resembles reality.

As far as the “plot” goes, it’s not much more than what you saw in the fake trailer in

“Grindhouse” that inspired the film. Mexican Federale Machete is initially after a notorious drug kingpin (Seagal), who gets the best of him, brutally killing his wife and leaving him for dead. Flash forward three years and we find Machete in the States, working day labor and avoiding the Immigration Department and their field agent Sartana (Alba), who is also investigating “The Network”, a sort of an Underground Railroad for illegal immigrants ran by Luz (Michelle Rodriguez). When Machete is approached by the slimy businessman Booth (Jeff Fahey) to attempt to assassinate De Niro’s character; all hell breaks loose.

But the so-called plot is only a frail framework Rodriguez uses to support his non-stop visual assault. The film is high on cynicism and even higher on titillation and absurdity. And that’s what makes it so much fun to watch; by far the most unexpected guilty pleasure I’ve had this year. If you try to take any of this seriously, you will hate this film…and you would have missed the point entirely.

How else can you possibly explain a film with Danny Trejo as the star? The man simply cannot act, which is quite often a limitation in a movie (unless your name is Ben Stiller). Now Trejo is great as a supporting actor in smaller roles; as long as he’s called upon just to look menacing and snarl a lot…along with performing action sequences. Delivering dialog, however, is not on the first page of his List of Skills (not sure it’s even in the first three chapters). No problem…Rodriguez masks this by simply not having Machete say too much (although I might contend that anything above four lines is “too much”). Whenever the script calls for actual discussions, Machete usually sits there and listens intently to the other character.

Those characters also work because for the most part, they don’t take themselves too seriously either…with the exception of Alba, who isn’t usually confused with Kate Winslet in the acting department, and Don Johnson, who has been over the hill for so long that he can’t remember what the top looked like.

Making up for them is Fahey at his reptilian best, Cheech Marin as a gun toting priest, and Michelle Rodriguez as a bad assed hero to the “revolution”.

It’s all idiotic B-movie fun, best to be enjoyed by totally disengaging your brain and just rolling with it. After all, when a film has Lindsay Lohan in a nun’s habit firing a 44 Magnum, miniskirted twin nurses wasting people with machine pistols, a Gatling Gun mounted on a Harley, a weed-whacker as a deadly weapon, and a character glibly still talking while disemboweling himself with a sword; what use is a brain?

My Rating: Bill Nelsen (2 ½ footballs)