

# I didn't like it like that

by Mark Farmer

Despite praise for being the first major Hollywood film directed by a black woman (Darnell Martin), *I Like It Like That* is barely likable. A shame, since it starts with so much promise. It's the story of one woman's struggle to keep things together in the Ghetto, and it starts out with a fine sense of irony, humor and direction. Unfortunately the irony and humor drop off.

Lisette is a young mother with a leech of a husband; unfaithful and selfish, but not without a kind of charm (why else would she be hanging around the turd?). Hubby Chino gets his ass busted for theft, and Lisette has to take care of the kids all by her lonesome, without a job. Happily though, she lucks into a job with a recording executive who ends up boinking her under his desk.



Lauren Vélez in the pit of despair in *I like it Like That*

Chino gets out of the clink, shit hits the fan and domestic disputes ensue. Lots of domestic disputes. Too many domestic disputes. The movie may be about the gritty side of Barrio

life, but you can only watch so many fights and arguments before they become pointless. The further you watch, the more serious the movie takes itself, and that's too bad, because it's best when it's playful. Case in point is the

character of Alexis. Alexis is Lisette's brother Alex, a transvestite saving up to become transsexual, or "get the chop," as he puts it. He's campy, sexy and provides much-

needed comic relief.

Rita Moreno, the grand-dame of Latin-American actresses, also puts in a delightful cameo as the evil mother-in-law, the little devil sitting on Lisette's shoulder. Too bad we don't see more of her.

Chino is solid as the stereotypical, macho, ghetto cool-guy, thinking he can string his woman along with fast talk and empty promises just long enough to lay the girl next door. The guy's so dumb he thinks Sangria, Spanish fly and a cactus(?) will win Lisette back.

I'm not sure what director Martin is trying to prove with this film: life is tough? Fidelity über alles?

In the end the film is pointlessly depressing for far too long. All the fights and arguments don't lead anywhere or contribute anything. However, anyone who's felt life crumbling around their ears will be able to slip into Lisette's shoes for a half an hour or so. I just ended up wishing there were more upbeat moments to slip into as well.

*I Like It Like That* is playing at Wormwood's Dog & Monkey Cinema on Gottingen St., Feb 3 - 9.

# Reservoir odds

by Jen Horsey

Saturday night, several of my friends and I decided to head down to the Oxford Theatre to catch the midnight showing of *Reservoir Dogs*. It was being presented as a fund raiser by the Dal/Kings Model United Nations. Anticipating a bit of a crowd, we headed down a few minutes early in order to get a decent seat.



What met us a scant block away from the theatre was a hoard of people lined up to get in to see this flick. There were hundreds of them presenting a rather odd picture. It was as if, somehow, *Skinny Puppy*, *Sloan* and *Moist* all got booked into the same venue. Everyone was between 18 and 26. From the L.L. Bean wearers, to the alterno-kids in their Pumas to the guys in the black suits and white shirts. They were all outside waiting in the cold to see a movie that's been in video stores forever.

Then it hit me. *Reservoir Dogs* became a cult film when I wasn't watching.

Ok, so I'm no newbie when it comes to cult films. My favorite high-school memories are from Saturday night expeditions to the *Rocky Horror Picture*

Show in Toronto's Bloor Cinema. This showing of *Reservoir Dogs* was definitely an event which was strangely reminiscent of those days. The opening credits were accompanied by a series of cat-calls and smatterings of applause, and the excitement in the air was tangible.

My friends and I began to discuss how we could hand out 'scripts' at the start of a showing, to initiate some audience interaction for this film. Then the actual film began, and I remembered why that is probably not a very good idea. We'd seen the Madonna speech scene, and now there was Mr. Orange writhing in his own blood. I suspect that many of the assembled audience members were amazed at this. It does have quite the impact the first time you see it. The good guys aren't supposed to get shot right?

But no, this is a Quentin Tarantino creation, and things just don't work that way. There's no point in going into detail about the film. If you haven't seen it, you should. If you have to rent it, do so, but look closely. Those ominous coffins and the hearse in the warehouse all but disappear on a tv screen.

It worries me slightly that this film could become this popular, and somewhere deep in my heart, I hope that there were a lot of people there just to see it because they liked *Pulp Fiction*, and hadn't seen *Reservoir Dogs* yet. But with the abundance of suit-wearing gangsters in attendance, I'm doubtful.

Why does this worry me? Tarantino loves to twist our perceptions; the audience is sympathetic with the plight of the criminals, and couldn't care less about innocent bystanders. The line between right and wrong is all but obliterated, and any accepted values are tossed out the window.

Ok. Fine. Great job Quentin, you've made us think. So now we'll walk away from the theatre vaguely disgusted with ourselves for thinking that it's too bad that Mr. Pink didn't escape with the loot. But the problem is, people are going back to the film for a second, and third showing. And they aren't analyzing the cinematography, they're reveling in the violence, and lessening its significance by becoming accustomed to it. And sure, some people think that's fine, but should something of this nature become the Cult Film of our generation? What does that say about us?

But maybe it's February and I have too much work to do. Maybe I should put some of this analytical energy into my studies, and lighten up. But I can't help thinking that it's just a little bit odd that one of the most personally violent films that contemporary Hollywood has thrown at us is also well on its way to joining the ranks of the Cult Classic.

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