

This *Lethal Weapon* has depth as well as death

Lethal Weapon
Warner Bros.
Paramount Theatre

review by Glenn St-Germain

The ads are so sleazy. "Two cops. Glover carries a weapon... Gibson is one." Makes it sound like another senseless, ultra-violent, macho cop movie, like something Stallone would do. With Mel Gibson in the title role, one could think of it as "What if the Road Warrior was Dirty Harry?"

Not quite. This movie is better than one would expect. Gibson and Danny Glover are two L.A. homicide detectives trying to solve a murder, while trying to get used to each other.

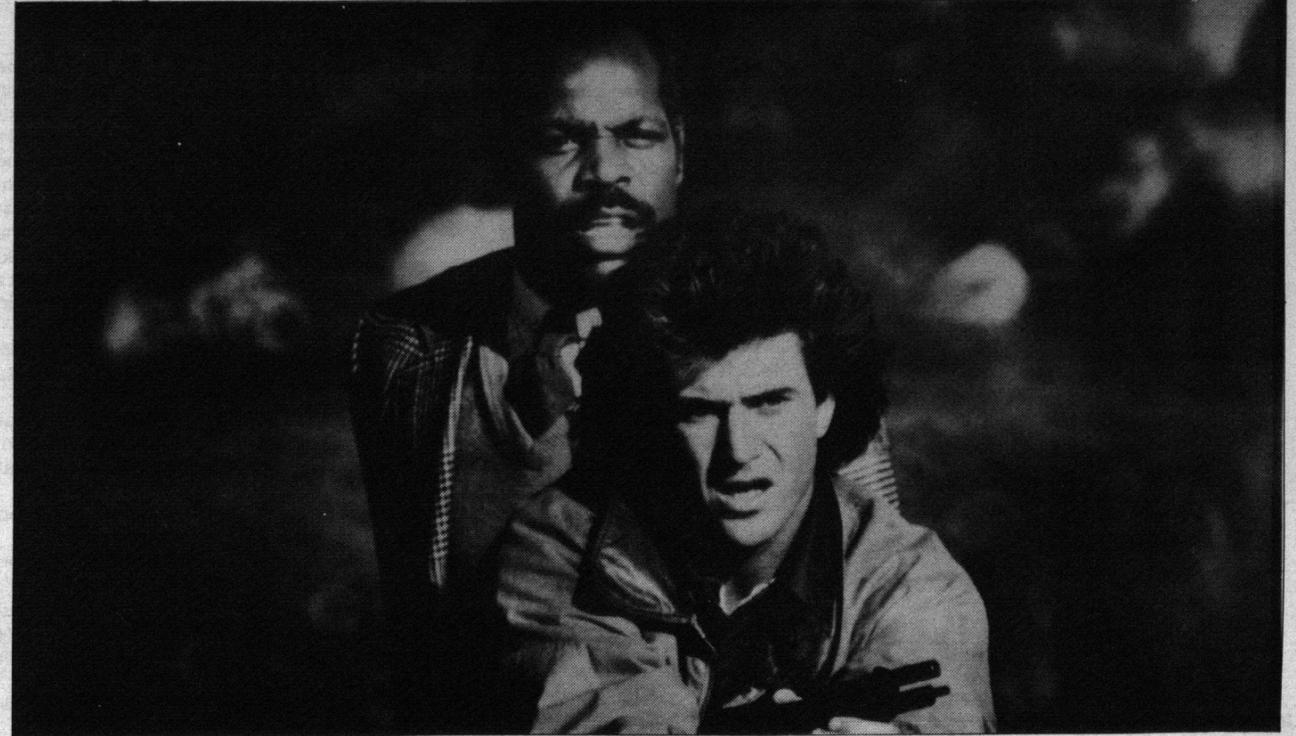
Cop movies of late have had pairs of detectives in the central roles, who have some kind of contrast. Old/young, neat/sloppy, good/bad, black/white... *Lethal Weapon's* two main characters have all of these contrasts.

Roger Murtaugh (Glover) just turned 50. He's a family man, with a nice house in a nice neighborhood. He dresses neatly and is really a nice guy.

Martin Riggs (Gibson) is young. He's scuzzy. He lives in a trailer on the beach. He's not a bad guy, but he is crazy. His sanity's been on the edge ever since his wife died in an accident.

He's on probation while the police shrinks decide what to do with him, and whether he's really crazy or not. Meanwhile, he talks down a man threatening to jump from a roof — by handcuffing himself to the jumper, saying "Okay, you want to jump, let's jump!", then doing just that — into a waiting fire department safety air-bag.

Riggs is called a "lethal weapon" because of his training. In Vietnam he was part of a



specially-trained intelligence unit. He's deadly with any weapon he can get his hands on, including his own hands.

Anyway, Riggs and Murtaugh investigate a murder that was initially thought to be a suicide, but turns out to be connected to drug smuggling by some crooked ex-CIA and military intelligence types, including someone from the same special unit from 'Nam.

Lethal Weapon is a taut, nicely-paced action thriller. The characters are fairly human. It isn't just one long bloodbath. It's even quite amusing in places. The body count is a bit high, (although nowhere near as high as the likes of *Cobra* or *Death before Dishonor*).

Richard Donner shows his versatility as a director here, having directed such varied films as *Superman*, *The Omen*, and *The Toy*.

Everything here clicks nicely.

Lethal Weapon is not the best movie around, but it is fairly exciting. It is nicely acted (Mel Gibson makes a great psycho!).

It's better than one would think, given the ads. But it seems that the American public wants ultraviolent movies these days. It's refreshing to see that someone can make a film that has a bit of depth along with the gunplay.

Violent murder and voodoo in *Angel Heart*

Angel Heart
West Mall 8
Tri Star Pictures

review by Naomi Pabst

Authentically set in New York then New Orleans in the mid 1950's the mystery movie *Angel Heart* almost exclusively starring Mickey Rourke, could be described in only one way. Bizarre. Rourke plays Harold Angel, a typical Brooklyn private eye who is given a task by the malevolent Louis Cyphre (Robert DeNiro) to find the missing 'Johnny Favorite'.

The hunt transports Angel from the slums of Harlem to the bayou's of New Orleans where he meets and falls in love with the beautiful mulatto voodoo queen Epipouny Proudfoot (Lisa Bonet).

Initially, this movie is one of a breed of

1950's style detective storylines, in which a handsome, swinger-type protagonist (Rourke) with a constant three day hair growth on his face and a cigarette hanging out of his mouth appears to be en route to becoming a hero. This idea ends abruptly.

Explicit, gory murders and magic become prevalent in the plot. It becomes increasingly plagued by religious antics ranging from Christian theology to fortune telling, voodoo, dancing rites, rituals involving chickens, and a lot of references to the devil.

A positive aspect of the show was the acting. Mickey Rourke plays his part skillfully and convincingly with no apparent blunders. Particularly humorous is his phobia of chickens. Lisa Bonet sheds her pure *Cosby Show* image and plays a seventeen year old

sexual dynamo who already has a son. These two are portrayed in a dramatic love scene which is far from erotic and is instead distressing. Robert de Niro acts well too, initially preceived as a religious fanatic but veering more and more towards evil. Only Robert de Niro could peel apart a hardboiled egg with his (2 inch) fingernails and make it look sinister, saying in a menacing tone: "I don't like messy accounts."

The cinematography of the film was splendid. The set showed New York city streets and upstate countryside in midwinter contrasted with the hot summer-like weather of Louisiana and lots of rain in suspenseful parts. 1955 style automobiles and clothing were magnificently appropriate, and the music, mainly blues and jazz, was good as

well. But we could do without the cheap *Thrilleresque* effects.

Drawbacks of *Angel Heart* include a lack of explanation for various occurrences and weird outcomes. The biggest flaw of the entire movie is the ending where they introduce aspects of the supernatural after an entire movie of mere strangeness.

All in all, Allan Parker yet again successfully directed an entertaining and captivating movie. Mickey Rourke very capably engages in a role in which he is constantly dominating the screen. It is generally a rapidly-paced mystery drama with a touch of humour interwoven sparsely throughout.

If you can get into a 1950's style show with bizarre twists and an odd outcome, *Angel Heart* is worth your entertainment dollar.

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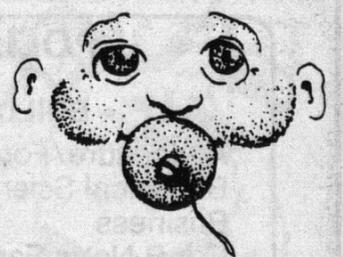
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