

# Another boring sequel to a popular movie

by J.A. Stephan

*Another 48 Hours*  
directed by Walter Hill  
produced by Paramount

The sequel to *48 Hours* is both violent and humorless. The original, which came out in 1982, was funny within the storm of action. *Another 48 Hours* is all thunder and lightning.

Director Walter Hill, whose previous hits include *Red Heat* and *Extreme Prejudice*, was faced with two major problems in developing a follow-up to the enormously successful *48 Hours*. In an interview for *The Toronto Star*, Hill said, "[We] were obliged to repeat the kind of moments that the first film had and that the fans expected to experience again — but [we] couldn't repeat any of the actual incidents... We needed a methodology which allowed us to do what the first film did — only differently."

Hill also had to deal with Murphy's superstardom. "Well, you can't discover Eddie Murphy again, and our new movie reflects that. The first time, Eddie was a kid. Now, he's an institution."

To combat the first problem, Hill relied on the talents of scriptwriters Larry Gross (who co-wrote *48 Hours*), Jeb Stuart, and John Fasano. What they created is a story bursting with fights, gunfire, collisions, and explosions. The fights are predominantly between

Cates (Nolte) and Hammond (Murphy). Cates is in a sour mood because he is being investigated by Internal Affairs over a shooting. If he doesn't produce Iceman, an illusive crime lord, within 48 hours, he will go to jail.

Hammond is pissed off because Cates won't return the money Hammond entrusted to him. Not only that, but he is a victim of the Iceman's wrath. Cates is determined that Hammond will help discover the Iceman in exchange for the money; consequently, the two hook up to do battle with the bad guys and with each other.

The men who take the contract on Hammonds' life are trigger-happy bikers. The first scene of the film finds them blowing away two state troopers and a bartender. Their hunger for killing is insatiable. One victim has the bad fortune to lose an ear and a lot of blood before being blown away.

Even the good guys are guilty of recklessness: Hammond stings a cowboy barfly with a bullet to the kneecap and Cates fries a suspect in a gasoline fire.

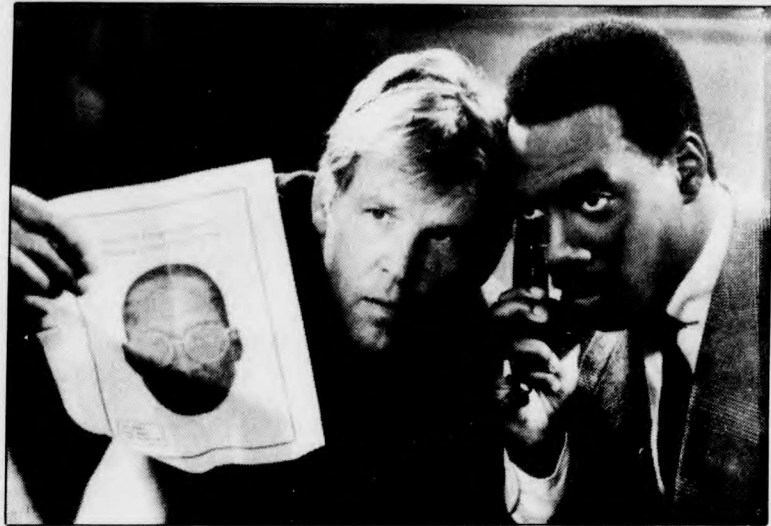
The climax has the opposing sides shooting up a crowded nightclub. There is an overabundance of gun-play, breaking glass and falling bodies. This violent eruption leaves almost no one standing. Justice and entertainment are shown to be best served by a high body count.

Nolte plays the jaded cop with

his usual aplomb. Although the character lacks believability, Nolte takes it in stride and manages a certain weary determination in getting the job done.

Murphy's return to the character of Reggie Hammond did not fare as well. Smartly dressed and perfectly groomed, Murphy looks better suited for a guestspot on *Arsenio* than the role of an ex-convict. His natural gifts as a comedian are lost behind Hill's demand for incessant action.

Hill's failure to utilize his stars will be the death of *Another 48 Hours*. It was the unique chemistry between Nolte and Murphy that made the first film so appealing. Without that, this picture remains another shoot-em-up, blow-em-up bore.



Nick Nolte and Eddie "the institution" Murphy look intense, thoughtful in *Another 48 Hours*. The film has all the chemistry of a grade nine science class.

## bohemia

a column  
by Ira Nayman

Watching the Beatles' *Yellow Submarine* on television, I was reminded of the first time I saw it. It was at an "art house" theatre in Berkeley early in the seventies. There couldn't have been more than a hundred seats (well, benches, actually). The air was thick with smoke of which I was too young to identify the source.

Times sure have changed. And, the way we watch film has changed with them.

In the 1940's, large theatres called "film palaces" were built. Seating thousands, these theatres accommodated the widescreen process of the 1950's, offering an all-encompassing experience. Moreover, film was essentially a group experience: the viewer could lose herself in the audience for a couple of hours, or assess her response in comparison to others.

In the 1990's, few film palaces remain; they have been replaced by multi-screen "cineplexes." Screens at these theatres are usually quite small, making it harder for viewers to become as involved in the film. And, since there are fewer seats (some theatres have as little as a hundred), film is no longer the communal experience it once was.

The reasons for this change are — surprise, surprise — economic. If you have, say, two thousand seats in a single theatre, a lot of seats may go empty; on the other hand, if you change the film too quickly, you may lose customers who had planned on seeing it.

If you divide your theatre into five smaller ones with only four hundred seats each, you can show five different films. Since you can appeal to five different potential audiences with the different films, you are likely to fill more seats, taking in more money. In addition, because films are rented on a week-by-week basis, films that are not popular do not leave too many seats empty, and can be quickly replaced, while popular films can simply be held over as long as they continue to fill houses. (Therefore, be warned: if you want to see a film that you do not expect will be popular, see it fast!)

The ultimate extension of this attempt to target films to their audience is found in television. In the early days of the medium, the film studios, afraid of the competition, refused to sell their products to the networks. They changed their minds when

they realized how much money could be made from TV; today, every major film producer also has a television production division.

Cable stations devoted to movies (Canada is one of the most wired countries in the world), video cassette recorders (between 60 and 70 per cent of Canadian households already own a VCR) and regular TV are all changing the film experience further. Again, the reason is economic: rather than abandon films after their initial theatrical release, producers squeeze dollars out of them by selling them to television.

Television reduces the film experience in many ways. Because of the size of the screen, and the way the image is projected, a lot of detail is lost. Furthermore, the shape of the film image is approximately three times as wide as it is high, but the television image is square: to show a theatrical film, large sections have to be cut off either side of the screen.

Moreover, television watching is a small group or individual activity. Film, once a community event, has now become solitary entertainment!

Let me offer another example. The cinematography of Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* was extremely powerful, the images by turn beautiful and horrific. However, when the 70 millimetre image was reduced for television, the film looked, well, ordinary. On top of that, I missed the often awestruck reaction of the audience I originally saw it with when I watched it alone (Fortunately, I was watching it for the performances of Martin Sheen, Robert Duvall and, especially, Marlon Brando: some things television just can't kill!)

Finally, a more personal observation about the changing film experience. I recently took part in the following conversation at a concession stand before seeing the film *Cinema Paradiso*:

"Can I have a box of chocolate covered almonds?"

"Uhh... sorry. We don't have any."

"Okay. How about chocolate covered peanuts?"

"There. Thanks to free trade, that's what we've got."

The kid behind the counter pointed to a box of Goobers. Now, I've put a lot of strange things in my mouth, but at some point you have to draw the line. I laughed. "I'm not eating anything called Goobers," I said, and walked away. I don't know about anybody else, but free trade sure has diminished the quality of my life!



Nick Nolte and Eddie Murphy look dangerous, but vulnerable in *Another 48 Hours*. If you really like violence, you'll really like this film (although you'll probably be a mercenary in Central America).

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