

The Equalizer 2 improves on the original

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 20 July 2018 03:33



Rating: ««« out of «««««

Running Time: 121 minutes

To be frank, I wasn't a fan of the 2014 update of *The Equalizer*, at least not in the way it was intended. This reviewer found it to be bloodthirsty, with the central character killing his foes in an almost gleeful manner and in the most violent ways possible (if memory serves, at one point using power tools and horrific booby traps). At the time, I think I joked that the main character should have been re-branded as "The Eliminator" instead. While

The Equalizer 2

is still a bit silly and doesn't offer many surprises story-wise, it does correct several of the original film's flaws.

This time out, ex-CIA agent Robert McCall (Denzel Washington) seems to be using his LYFT driver job as a method of finding clients. This includes senior Sam Rubenstein (Orson Bean), who is trying to prove himself as the rightful owner of a rare piece of art stolen during WWII. Also, after the garden at his apartment complex is vandalized, McCall meets a student with artistic ambitions named Miles (Ashton Sanders) and eventually attempts to prevent him from joining a local gang. However, the main plot follows McCall's attempts to stop a group of military-trained killers after they attack government agent and friend Susan Plummer (Melissa Leo). McCall calls upon ex-team member Dave York (Pedro Pascal) for assistance in catching the thugs.

There are three separate plotlines running through the movie, which means that it does take

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some time to develop the new characters, discover who the villains are and get to the main conflict. Viewers will have to be patient as the second half is significantly more exciting than the first. In fact, one individual sequence involving a group of horrible businessmen early on seems added simply to throw a bit of action into the proceedings until the central story develops.

The movie also spends some extra time trying to humanize its lead and for the most part, the work pays off. McCall even offers some of the thugs the option of doing the right thing first, before laying them out during beat-downs. Washington is always charismatic and delivers the physical blows effectively, but also injects a bit more humor to some of the dangerous scenarios. One scene involving the hero and central villains on a suburban street even offers some amusing and effective verbal barbs.

There's a very tense sequence of hide-and-seek with life and death consequences that plays out in an effective manner as the camera follows a character walking down a hallway. The climax, which sees the hero take on his central foe against the backdrop of a storm, also works very well. And since McCall is fighting military-trained bad guys, the violence being used on them doesn't feel as brutal or vicious. There are also a couple of visual tricks on display before and during the action that add a bit of variety to the photography.

Admittedly, the movie's attempts to deal with social issues are less than subtle. There are also a few questionable exchanges. At one point, McCall encourages Miles that if he stays in school and continues on the right path he can earn a living. I did find it funny that the protagonist then won't pay the kid a proper wage for his painting skills (I know that McCall and the residents are supposed to be cash-strapped and the hero takes other action on the student's behalf, but the lead could still have offered him more). At least the movie is trying to add a little more meaning to the proceedings, even if comes across awkwardly and in between a lot of killing and bloodletting.

Silliness like this is inherent in most action flicks and regardless of its flaws, this reviewer found *The Equalizer 2*

to be a decent popcorn action picture helped tremendously by its lead performance and a couple of solid action scenes in its second half. I'm being a bit generous with my rating, but considering how I felt about the original film, this one seemed like a definite improvement and as such, worthy of a small reward.

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