

'Machete' – wait until it's on DVD



Machete

Rated R

1.5 bagels out of 5

By Howie Nave

Writer/director Robert Rodriguez is by far one of the trippiest filmmakers when it comes to framing a story. Long before the “Twilight” movies made vampires sexy and brooding Rodriguez in the last century was freaking us out with “From Dusk to Dawn” by making vampires what they should be: not of this planet and scary as hell.

Then there was this century’s “Grindhouse” which handsomely paid homage to those cheesy B-movies reminiscent of those classic exploitation films of the '70s.

Ironically, it was during “Grindhouse” in 2007 that we first caught a glimpse of what would be “Machete” in the way of a fake movie trailer. In that trailer were many who would wind up starring in this movie. Rodriguez continues his “Mexploitation” genre with his latest outing, “Machete.” Fans of his work will remember 1992’s “El Mariachi” which follows a similar thread (as a Mexploitation flick) and like that flick

"Machete" offers up plenty of in your face, non-stop violence, a maxed out gore factor coupled with topical political issues (primarily illegal immigration complete with angry Tea Party types) that will surely piss some folks off. Part comedy in the darkest sense of the word with plenty of blood shipped in, "Machete" is anything but mainstream and will appeal primarily to Rodriguez and Quentin Tarantino fans. Others will probably leave the theater scratching their heads wondering if someone had slipped something in their popcorn.

What a role of a lifetime for character actor and Rodriguez regular Danny Trejo. Usually he's relegated to playing crooks in secondary roles that get bumped off and not the title character. You'll probably recognize him in mainstream movies such as "Desperado" and "Con Air." Most of his past wardrobe usually consisted of prison garb or leftover outfits reminiscent of "The Postman." Trejo easily fits in with other former heavies that include Steven Seagal and former "Miami Vice" star Don Johnson in roles that would have had their fans screaming, "Say it ain't so!" as drug lords playing against their one-time good guy image. Hey, it worked for John Travolta (Tarantino's "Pulp Fiction") revitalizing his stalled career, so maybe these guys were thinking the same thing when they agreed to sign on.

Oscar heavyweight Robert De Niro plays U.S. Sen. McLaughlin who hates everybody and gets a contract put out on him for his efforts, but more on that later. Then there's the women who are anything but Barbies here. Michelle Rodriguez, Jessica Alba and twins Elise and Electra Avellan probably won't be in any Disney movies after this. And then there's troubled actress Lindsay Lohan. Who knew that the character she plays here would have carried over into her real life? She plays April (which I believe was the same month she appeared in court for the second time) and yes, she's topless and drugged out. Many have speculated that she wasn't acting at all, but merely playing herself. I can't be too tough on her as easy as

it is because Alba, although she looked hot, was less convincing as an INS officer. Although I wouldn't mind being interrogated by her. I think they dressed her up so provocatively to take your mind off of her bad acting.

Regardless, I respect Robert Rodriguez because he takes chances (some work, some don't) but here the thin premise rests pretty much on revenge, bad stereotypes and really bad humor. Machete (Trejo), he's a former Mexico federale who is hired to kill the senator and I thought he should have wounded the writers (written by both Robert and his cousin Alvaro Rodriguez). And just like the city of South Lake Tahoe, nepotism is a big part of Rodriguez's movies. In addition to cousin Alvaro Robert's sister, Rebecca, Rodriguez serves as editor with Roxie Rodriguez working in the capacity of production office intern.

If you love this picture, than fear not because there's talk already of another one in the works. "Machete" is rated R for strong bloody violence throughout, language, some sexual content and nudity with a running time of 1 hour and 42 minutes.

Howie Nave is host/emcee/manager of The Improv at Harveys. You can hear him Monday-Friday 6 to 10am on KRLT FM-93.9.