

## Lethal Weapon 2 ★★★

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**Year of Release:** 1989

Review by Randy Parker

**Country:** USA

**Verdict:** See It

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With *Lethal Weapon 2*, Mel Gibson, Danny Glover, and director Richard Donner have created a Hollywood rarity: a worthwhile sequel. Although the movie doesn't quite live up to its predecessor, it does succeed in recreating the slick mix of humor, action, and character that made the original a superior crime thriller and a \$70 million hit at the box office. Gibson and Glover are still teamed together as partners, bickering and teasing one another like a long-married husband and wife. Gibson has remained wild, daring, and cool under pressure, and Glover, as always, finds himself reluctantly agreeing to his partner's crazy plans. However, since the first film, Gibson has become more stable; we no longer question his will to live or fear that he's on the verge of exploding. The charismatic performances by Gibson and Glover help distinguish *Lethal Weapon 2* from other cop films.

The movie finds the two detectives chasing down vicious drug dealers while at the same time protecting the man whose testimony is crucial to the investigation. The plot is pedestrian and full of holes, but who cares when we're having so much fun? As the key witness in the investigation, Joe Pesci delivers an inspired comic performance with his grating personality and nasal-voice. Between Pesci's constant whining and Gibson and Glover's playful rapport, the movie has plenty of laughs.

The two leads play off each other especially well when Gibson discovers that Glover has spent the night sitting on the toilet ... and for good reason. The villains have booby-trapped it with explosives. Glover dare not stand up, let alone flush. In another clever scene, Glover creates a diversion for Gibson at the South African Consulate by pretending he wants to emigrate to South Africa. "But you're BLACK!" responds the horrified immigration official. "I want to join my brothers in their struggle against oppression!" Glover snaps back as he starts a big commotion to distract the securi-

ty guards. Equally amusing is Gibson returning home to his messy trailer and discovering (much to his dismay) Pesci vacuuming and neatening up.

*Lethal Weapon 2* has one car chase too many, but otherwise it's an exhilarating roller coaster ride of action and suspense. The movie maintains a high level of intensity from beginning to end. The brutal violence doesn't always mesh with the humor, but for the most part they exist harmoniously side by side. *Lethal Weapon 2* has a large body count, but it pushes all the right buttons to make us accept the violence.

Screenwriters Shane Black and Jeffrey Boam have blessed the movie with despicable villains who are worthy of a James Bond film. Joss Ackland plays the Minister of the South African Consulate—a cold, murderous criminal who hides behind his diplomatic immunity. As his right-hand man, Derrick O'Connor is equally deplorable, a heartless killer in his own right. These villains need not have been South Africans (in fact, the movie could have done without its underdeveloped political undertones), but their politics makes them all the more creepy.

The only area where Donner and his cast come up short is in their attempts to give the movie some substance and the characters some depth. The film tries to develop Gibson's character, but its efforts are superficial. For example, to show that he has regained his ability to love, the film throws in a superfluous affair between Gibson and Patsy Kensit. Their encounter is just window dressing, a feeble attempt at character development. Glover fares no better; his character development is limited to one small plot strand about his daughter appearing in a condom commercial. The filmmakers should have known better than to worry about making the characters complex; the movie is already overflowing with big laughs and rousing action.