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Machete Slays

Adam Leipzig · Monday, September 6th, 2010

Robert Rodriguez's *Machete* is pure genius and pure entertainment at every level – story, execution, politics, and casting, casting, casting. Watching the film this afternoon at Los Angeles's Vista Theatre, one of the last of the still-operating movie palaces, with a nearly-full house at 1:30 in the afternoon, I was reminded of the sheer joy of movie-going. Robert Rodriguez reinvents the pleasure of having popcorn in one hand, a Coke in the other, and a knowing laugh coming from your throat every minute.

The story? Revenge, as basic as it gets. Execution? That's what *Machete* does, bloody, generally deserved, and mostly excessively violent fun. Politics? It is all over the place. Only in Rodriguez's world would a fleet of hopping low-rider cars stare down an army of Texas vigilantes, or cholas sport nurse uniforms and automatic weapons. Casting? That's a lot of the genius – from Lindsay Lohan as a drug-addicted internet porn queen to Steven Seagal as a Mexican drug lord. Michelle Rodriguez and Jessica Alba have never been better, hotter, or more self-aware with the fun they're having with the genre. And Danny Trejo as *Machete* is badder than *Shaft*, more hard-boiled than Sam Spade, tougher than Clint Eastwood and suaver than James Bond.

Robert Rodriguez continues to make innovative movies, films as interesting as the original *El Mariachi* and those teenage films he shot with a wind-up 8-millimeter camera (he used the way the spring wound down to achieve a primitive under-cranking – artists work with the tools at hand). His films have been smart, fun and profitable. But he still has to scrape together financial support. Although Fox released *Machete*, Rodriguez had to cover the film's production budget from a variety of sources, like any independent filmmaker. Makes one wonder how we will ever discover the next Robert Rodriguez.

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