

Film

El Mariachi

Directed by Robert Rodriguez

Did you ever wonder what the wild west is really like? Well, here you have it in a thrilling shoot'em up with weird and wonderful overtones. *El Mariachi* (The Guitar Player) is the first movie from university student/film-maker Robert Rodriguez and it is, quite simply, a blast.

Set in a town somewhere on the U.S.- Mexican border, the film chronicles the ups and downs of a down-on-his-luck guitar player on his quest for fame and fortune. Arriving in town full of hopes and dreams, he finds himself in the middle of a bloody drug feud, facing men with whom his only connection is his resemblance to the local drug lord's main target.

Needless to say, this sensitive young musician needs protection, and he finds it in the person of a beautiful young barmaid just crazy (and smitten) enough to take him in. Unfortunately, she also happens to be involved with the drug lord in a big way, but ... well, the rest has to be seen to be believed.

This is an action movie- those seeking sparkling wit will be disappointed; however, it is not your typical shoot'em up, either. Slap-stick humour, generously interspersed amongst chases and gratuitous violence, balances the movie and gives it a slightly madcap flavor. Director Rodriguez uses the humor to air some of his views on the effects of technology on society and even pokes fun at the whole shoot'em up genre. There is also a definite sense of hot-blooded Hispanic style evident in the film's tense close-ups and rapid pace. This is the kind of movie that makes you want to pull on your snake-skin cowboy boots and ride your Harley off into the sunset.

Performances in this film were uniformly

well-done, with special mention given to Consuelo Gomez, who is rivetting as the sultry barmaid. Carlos Gallardo draws all the audience's sympathy as the guitar player and Reinol Martinez is funny as the guitar player's lookalike, mainly because he is so straight-faced about the whole mix-up.

I highly recommend this movie to anyone who wants a change from the usual Hollywood fare but who feels an "alternative" movie would be over their heads (or below their standards). Though this film will not be seen at the cinemas in the mall, it is thoroughly entertaining, especially if you love action.

Film-maker Rodriguez probably won't be going back to university now that he has a two-year deal from Columbia motion pictures under his belt. It is a testament to his belief in himself and hard work that such a thrilling and successful movie can be made by a relative unknown.

El Mariachi will be seen 7pm Thursday Oct. 21, 9pm Friday Oct. 22, 7pm Saturday Oct. 23, and 9pm Sunday Oct. 24 at City Cinemas.

Available at: HENDERSON & CUDMORE, 101 Grafton St.