ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Latest *Lethal Weapon* more of the same

BY STUART GREEN
MOVIE REVIEWER

After the third installment of the inexplicably popular *Lethal Weapon* series, Mel Gibson said he'd never do a fourth.

If only we could be so lucky.

But we're talking about Hollywood and as most people know, in Tinsel Town money talks.

So here we are, six years after the last film, and Gibson has dusted off his tormented vet/renegade cop routine for another, hopefully final, kick at the cat.

Gibson and co-star Danny Glover reprise their roles as aging LA police detectives Martin Riggs and Roger Murtaugh who, this time around, are promoted in order to keep them off the streets and out of trouble.

Of course that's a futile effort. During a fishing trip with weaselly informant turned private eye Leo Getz (Joe Pesci), they accidentally stumble onto an elaborate slave-smuggling ring led by a ruthless Chinese mobster (Hong Kong action star Jet Li).

Only these guys would have this kind of dumb luck.

Working from a weak-as-water screenplay by Channing Gibson, director Richard Donner, who helmed the previous three films as well as some reel stinkers (like *Conspiracy Theory*), takes the opportunity to blow up anything and everything.

About the best thing that can be said for *LW4* is that it is a suitable entry into the series. Which isn't really saying much. Maybe the first film had some charm – certainly Gibson and Glover seem to be having fun – but it's got to the point where everyone involved seems to be going through the motions with no real purpose or motivation.

Back for another go round are Pesci and Rene Russo as Riggs' now pregnant live-in love. They, like the Riggs and Murtaugh characters, are stale and serve no purpose other than to increase the star power of the marquee. New this time around is the underused Chris Rock as a foul-mouthed sycophant who has some of the film's best lines.

Another potential bright spot is Jet Li, the second biggest action star in Asia behind Jackie Chan. But again, he's wasted by having his presence reduced to one poorly directed and shot fight scene.

Lethal Weapon 4 is easily the worst film of the series so we can only hope it's also the last, yet somehow I don't think so.

Mel Gibson (left) and Danny Glover are back on the beat as Riggs and Murtaugh in the fourth installment of the *Lethal Weapon* series.

Small Soldiers – big violence

Explosive violence of a more cartoonish nature is the order of the day in *Small Soldiers*.

Joe Dante (Gremlins) directs this monotonous albeit well-intentioned take on *Toy Story* that features a truckload of great computerized special effects but little else.

When a defective shipment of interactive toy soldiers known as the Commando Elite accidentally finds its way to market in a small town, all hell breaks loose.

The soldiers have minds of their own and aren't afraid to use them, along with a raft of household appliances, to defeat the enemy Gorgonites, kindly mutant creeps who are the toy enemies of the Commando Elite.

Things get even worse when all the human inhabitants of the small town are perceived to be friends of the Gorganites. No one is safe.

Small Soldiers takes an interesting angle by making the soldiers the bad guys, but it's still missing a plot to hold things together.

Having began production without a finished script, it becomes apparent that many of the scenes were written to simply give the toys somewhere to fight.

After marveling at the special effects, there's little else to see. Maybe the kids will be more tolerant of the film's shortcomings.

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Ale trail launched in Waterloo

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The trail was launched in Waterloo Region and Wellington County by Brick Brewing Company (Waterloo), F&M Brewery (Guelph), Gold Crown Brewery (Waterloo), Old Mill Brewery (Elora), Sleeman Brewing in Guelph and Wellington County Brewery (Guelph).

Brewers on the trail say they want to educate beer drinkers about the history, art and science of craft brewing and encourage consumers to explore different kinds of beers.

And so far, the response has been good.

"We didn't know where this whole thing was headed when we started, but on Father's Day we had 150 people through here," said Dave Ryan of Brick Brewing, who has had calls from San Diego and Raleigh, North Carolina since The Ale Trail was launched in March.

The tour at Brick Brewing lasts about 45 minutes and includes sampling several beers and a small snack.

"The theory is, we will increase the profile of the small breweries across Ontario," said Ryan, noting the exposure may have already given the operations a boost.

"And for real beer buffs, the region is home to much of Canada's brewing history.

The first lager was brewed in Berlin (now Kitchener) in the late 1840s and the nation's first malt house was opened in Galt (now Cambridge) in 1856. And the first cream ale was produced in Guelph in 1895 by George Sleeman.

HOT ON THE ALE TRAIL

The 1998 Beer Lover's Ale Trail open house will take place Sundays from now until October from noon to 5 p.m. on the following dates: July 19, Aug. 16, Sept. 27 and Oct. 18.

■ **Brick Brewing Co.**, 181 King St. S., Waterloo, ON/1-800-505-8971

■ **F&M Brewery**, 355 Elmira Rd. Unit 135, Guelph, ON/(519) 824-1194
www.fmbrewery.com
Retail store open seven days a week.

■ **Gold Crown Brewery**, 71 King St. N., Waterloo, ON.

■ **Old Mill Brewery**
Located in the historic Granary Building at the foot of Mill Street, adjacent to the famous Elora Mill, 55 Mill St. W.
Elora, ON /(519) 846-5821

■ **Sleeman Brewing and Malting**, 551 Clair Rd. W.
Guelph, ON/(519) 822-1834

■ **Wellington County Brewery**, 950 Woodlawn Rd. W.
Guelph, ON/(519) 837-2337
www.sentex.net/wellington

■ **For more information call:**
1-800-265-6959
Or visit the Ale Trail web site at:
www.AleTrail.on.ca

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