

ARTS and FEATURES

Robocop 2 offers a look at the human soul, plus human guts

Robocop 2
Peter Weller, Nancy Allen, Tom Noonan and Gabriel Damon
Directed by Irvin Kershner
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The big questions in movie circles these days center around competition between *Dick Tracy* and *Batman*. "Which is a better film adaptation of a comic book character?" "Which movie better fulfilled the expectations and hype surrounding it?" "Who is hotter, Kim Basinger or Madonna?"

These questions are moot (except for the last one). *Robocop 2* kicks both their #**@* without hype, comic book characters or scantily clad sluts. And the violence is great too.

Don't be misled, however. *Robocop 2* is a serious inquiry into the depths of the human soul, with all its hopes, fears and desires. It examines the schism between mind and soul, it probes the inner being of man and woman, and ultimately regards the barrier between man and machine as trivial.

But hey, we liked it anyway. *Robocop 2* picks up where *Robocop* left off: gratuitous violence, crime-ridden slums, and one big, bad mechanical police officer by the name of Alex Murphy — a.k.a. Robocop (Peter

Tew/Healy Cinema

Weller). Robocop is still plagued by visions of his previous life, but this time there's something larger to consume his energies. Detroit's police force is on strike and a christ-figure drug king named Cain (Tom Noonan), is raking millions in on the profits from a new designer-drug called Nuke.

While Robocop is busy fighting his new enemy, Omni Consumer Products, the corporate empire that created the cyborg, is preparing a new, improved model of their super cop. The new design promises to rid itself of the old defects which marred Robocop — touches of compassion and the fleeting memories of the human cop he used to be.

Omni plans to provide its new unit with a mind as cunning and corrupt as that of any psychopath. Maybe more so. So the hunt for Psychotic Sam is on, and the only thing the company needs is an excuse to take Robocop off line.

That opportunity comes when Robo discovers the lair of Cain and his 12-year-old hitman, Hob (Gabriel Damon). Robo falls into the villains' hands and is

promptly mangled by magnets, torn open by power tools and returned to the police as the sum of his parts.

Robo's dismemberment is an opportunity for Omni to reprogram his directives and produce a more caring, sensitive and environmentally concerned robot. Instead of three straightforward and simple directives, Robocop is forced to follow such inane directives as: Take particular care to avoid offending anyone at any time for any reason whatsoever; Don't swing your arms on a ballroom floor, and; When any directive contradicts another, obey both.

Robocop feels confined by all these restrictions and takes actions to rid himself of any loyalty to Omni. He does this just in time too, because Omni has designed its new super cop, an ultimate psycho-warrior, who decides to wipe out Detroit instead of cleaning it up. Thus, Robocop must step in and attempt to eliminate the new crazed machine. And what happens from there is anyone's guess.

Robocop 2 delivers what it sets out to deliver: violence galore with enough comedy to lighten the atmosphere and make the audience relax. The villains are able to play off of Robocop and make it quite humorous.

The star of the film is, of course, Weller as Robocop. In the first movie he had to form an identity, and in this film he builds on the character he created. The audience sees him as the defender of justice, but they also watch Robo battle with his past life and the



Robocop lies in pieces on the ground after being dismantled by drug leader Cain

present programming that Omni has forced upon him. This leads to an excellent sub-plot which could lead to another sequel.

While *Robo 2* is a good movie, the plot has a few holes in it, and the storyline does not provide the psychological surprise of the first film. However, the

director's use of special effects, flashing lights and explosive action disguise the weak points. And, to tell the truth, that's what most of the audience came for anyway.

Moviegoers should be prepared to see a lot of blood, but there is some meaning beneath the gore. Robocop is

no longer human, but he is the embodiment of humanity; he wants freedom and desires love even if he cannot express his feelings. Robo is more than a cyborg, he is a man with a mission and there should be at least a couple of hours of fun-filled violence left in his circuits; so viewers beware.

Calendar of Events

Thursday June 28

Stu Weaver will appear at the Sky-light Exchange. For more information call 933-5550.

Liquid Sound and the Grapes will appear at the Cat's Cradle. For more information call 967-9053.

Second Self and Egypt will appear at the Brewery. For more information call 834-7108.

The ArtsCenter's Community Theater production of Moliere's "The Doctor in Spite of Himself" will be performed Thursday June 28 through Sunday July 1. Showtime is 8 p.m., except Sunday when the show starts at 3 p.m. Tickets are \$5.50 for Friends of The ArtsCenter and \$7 for the general public. For more information call 929-ARTS.

"Pieces," an exhibit of mixed media collage is on view at Duke University's East Campus Gallery until July 31.

The North Carolina Artist Exhibition will be on view until August 12 at the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh. For more information call 833-1935.

Manbites Dog Theater Company will perform the world premiere of *Report from the Holocaust*, based on the book by Larry Kramer. The show starts at 8:15 p.m. in the Duke Power Room, upstairs in the Durham Arts Council. Other performances are Saturday June 30, and Thursdays through Saturdays, July 5-7, and July 12-14. For more information call 628-0958.

"High Fiber," a juried exhibit of fiber art is on display in the Carolina Union Gallery until August 3.

Friday June 29

Dillon Fence will appear at the Cat's Cradle.

Root Boy Slim will appear at the Brewery.

Mister Potatohead will appear at Magdalena's La Terraza. For more information call 967-MAGS

Scrapyard will appear at the Sky-light Exchange.

Jim Magill will play original funny songs at The Ninth Street Bakery in Durham from 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. For more information call 286-0303.

The Fairlanes will play hot rock n'roll at The Cave. For more information call 968-9308.

Support group for separated and divorced persons will meet from noon to 1 p.m. in room 357 Sitterson Hall.

Saturday June 30

Bad Checks and Teasing The Korean will appear at the Cat's Cradle.

Mister Potatohead will appear at Magdalena's La Terraza.

Stu Weaver will appear at The Ninth Street Bakery.

Joe Bell and the Stinging Blades will play R&B at The Cave.

Sally Windhorn & the Works will appear at the Brewery.

Love Hate and Beau Nasty will appear at the Switch.

Sunday July 1

The Chapel Hill Preservation Society presents the Senior Art Show, a juried exhibit of works by local amateur artists 55 and older. The opening reception is from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. The exhibit will be on display Mondays through Fridays 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. until July 27. For more information call 942-7818.

Wednesday July 4

22 Tango, a dance band, will play at the ArtsCenter in Carrboro from 9:30 p.m. until 1 a.m. Admission is \$5 for the public and \$4 for friends.

Kanamits debut their own version of rock 'n roll

bananafish
Kanamits
Luminous Flux Records
●●●

The cover of the debut album by the Long Island trio the Kanamits draws immediate attention for its comic parody of Andy Warhol's famous design for *The Velvet Underground and Nico*. But where Lou Reed and company were outside the mainstream, spinning diverse and often inaccessible webs of sound, the Kanamits directly confront straight rock 'n roll, twisting it to their own ends.

The Kanamits is clearly singer-songwriter-vocalist Benjamin East's band. He and his cohorts recycle classic rock riffs underneath sweet ringing melodies. East is a rather average guitar player, but his vocals more than make up for it, often calling up comparisons to Bob Mould. The burden of the instrumental load is carried by a solid rhythm section, bassist Michael Jackel and drummer Nathan Tully. Tully, a powerful and often brilliant drummer, has been replaced by Dave O'Connor since the album was made, as he came down with what the band calls "Pete Best Syndrome."

The lead-off song, "Don't Wait," is the album's best cut, with the Kanamits taking their sound to perfection. Thick, beastly drumming dominates the mix, with frequent rhythm change-ups. East adds thick chunks of overdriven guitar and great rock vocals. Lyrics such as "At night I lay/I sweat through sleep/The walls are closing/in on me" seem particularly appropriate in the stifling, murky heat of summertime.

Brian Springer
Album

"Tick-Tick Boom!" is another winner, capitalizing on the same basic sound as "Don't Wait," with an even more infectious melody. "Wound Up" makes a tack towards hard rock, with East resurrecting the voice of original AC/DC frontman Bon Scott.

Though it seems that the Kanamits are aiming for the college-aged R.E.M.-bred crowd, only "Can't Ya See (Contras)" seems to have sociopolitical aspirations. And lyrics like "Well never tell me 'bout the Contras/Vietnam and Timbuktu" or "Can't you see/That you're invisible/To me" are rather vague at that. "Can't Ya See" does give a chance for East to take a stab at a bonafide guitar solo, which he pulls off, though not in spectacular fashion. The song is one of the album's best, though.

Tunes like "All Gone" and "Rain Again" owe their heart and soul to Tully. On the latter, Tully goes berserk near the end, completely taking over. Not to slight East's songwriting here, because he has no shortage of hooks, but, by

The Ratings

- — miserable
- — mediocre
- — enjoyable
- — quite good
- — unmissable

album's end, an unbroken pattern of two-chord verses and three-chord choruses does get a bit tiresome.

With eight songs clocking in at less than a half hour, the Kanamits know not to push the formulas too far. *bananafish* catches a band in transition from local

attraction to national draw. This band is a power-chord based rock outfit, but not one left to the frat party scene. The intelligence and talent are here, but they cannot be turned loose while struggling to escape a local market. A good first effort.

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