

## A Plea to Hollywood

by  
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I have to say that I was very disappointed with *Bad Boys II*. It's too bad because I have looked forward to this film all summer, and even prepared for it by popping the *Bad Boys* DVD into my player as a prelude to its sequel. So on opening day for *Bad Boys II*, I got my tickets in advance for the 7:00 show, purchased my nachos and cheese and a coke, and nestled into a good seat in the middle of the theater. But what a waste of money, energy, and time, and I would like to have all three refunded. The falling of dead bodies out of trucks, the digging around in cadavers for money and drugs, the upper body exposure of a female cadaver, and the excessive use of slow motion effects to magnify the penetration of bullets into bodies were a bit much. The use of a gun on the kid at the door, blowing off half of a person's body with a mine after he was already shot dead, and showing a carved-up body in a barrel were also a bit much - insensitive, tasteless, and over the top.

Over the last several years we have had a wonderful run of sequels come out of Hollywood, arguably: *X2*, *Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, *The Matrix Reloaded*, *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, *The Mummy Returns*, *Lethal Weapon 2*, and *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (which was much better than its original). But while I understand that as businesses, studios must focus on making money (preferably with proven successes), the concern I have is that films like *Lethal Weapon III*, *Jurassic Park: The Lost World*, *Jurassic Park 3*, *Terminator III: The Rise of the Machines*, and *Bad Boys II* do not become the norm for sequels. Sequel doesn't mean 'the same or repeat,' it means continuation. Characters then should grow, change, and mature throughout the course of sequels. Otherwise the film and its characters are boring and predictable. Ultimately, the lack of this consideration is what made this film so BAD! But we've already heard and read from the critics (and now me) of how terrible the film was, so I would like to offer some uninvited suggestions on how it could have been improved upon by adding depth to the characters, credibility to the relationships, and development of the plot.

1. At the beginning, Will Smith's character (Mike Lowrey) and Gabriel Union's character (Sydney Burnett) should have been shown meeting and spending time together in New York. This way we could have gotten a sense of their closeness and been sold on the credibility of the relationship. Show some "quality time" between Lowrey and Burnett's characters at Lowrey's luxury apartment. The use of Lowrey's apartment would have provided some continuity with the original film, and further sold us on their relationship. A kiss here and a look there didn't do it for me.
2. The relationship between Martin Lawrence's character (Marcus Burnett) and Sydney wasn't credible. I didn't feel any sibling love between them. They both seemed to be responding to a directive stating 'you two are siblings, so go out there and act like it.' This alone isn't sufficient to sell the relationship. Instead, have his sister come to town on a surprise visit. They then have a barbecue in Lawrence's yard, including dancing and conversation with loved ones. Have him smile at her and give her a hug for goodness sake.

3. Martin Lawrence was shot at the beginning of the film; yet 10 minutes later he wasn't limping from it. He was rolling around, shooting up, running, walking, and dodging cars and bodies on the expressway without any discomfort. The discomfort from the wound should have been a constant reminder of the hazards of the job with which he claimed to be fed up.
4. Marcus' wife in the film (played by Theresa Randle, from the original film) should have had a much more crucial role rather than just appearing in the film out of obligation. In *Bad Boys*, Marcus constantly complained about the lack of "quality time" with his wife. Why not use this in *Bad Boys II* to fuel his concerns about the hazards of the job and how it interferes with his family and "quality time?" These things would have sold us on the legitimacy of his concerns about remaining partners with Lowrey. Also, weren't his two sons older than the daughter? And what happened to the other son?
5. Gabrielle Union sold me on the FBI agent undercover as a money launderer, but her character was weak and dependent on Lowrey and Burnett, rather than independent. She needed to portray a strong, competent woman who was smart enough to realize her vulnerability as an undercover FBI agent in the midst of lunatics, and appreciate the danger of the situation. Instead she screamed on occasion and shot off a gun quite unconvincingly. She needed a personality more like Vanessa Williams' character in *Eraser*, beautiful, smart, and strong.
6. The villain was neither believable nor menacing. He was just a stupid man who complained about such petty things as rats in his attic, and being painted on the wall in the form of Jesus Christ. He was more focused on posturing than business.
7. What was the point of having the Haitians in the film? What was their role in the plot? The focus instead should have been placed on the Ku Klux Klan and their role in the drug smuggling ring. The movie showed one portrayal of a KKK member as a dumb redneck, but did not go inside the KKK to get a good sense of the relationship between the villain and the KKK.
8. Finally, as for the police chief played by Joe Pantoliano, the actor tried to rehash what was fresh and believable in *Bad Boys* instead of imparting some maturity, wisdom, and calmness from the eight years that have passed.

In sum, people are much more dynamic and pliable than the characters portrayed in this 8-year later sequel. They grow over time, and the film should reflect this reality. These improvements could add substantially to the depth of the characters, legitimacy of their relationships, and credibility of the story, and yet still maintain its entertaining qualities. Given these, I might even go back to see the movie again and buy the video. Without them I won't do either, which translates to a loss of revenue for the studio. So, while I realize that some wonderful sequels have spoiled me over the last ten years, I hope *Terminator 3: The Rise of the Machines* and *Bad Boys II* are not omens of things to come. Heck, I'm still waiting for justice to be done to the original *Jurassic Park*.