

Cheap Seats and Sticky Floors

"ONCE UPON A TIME IN MEXICO" DRIVEN BY GOOD PERFORMANCES FROM DEPP AND DAFOE

By **MATT MOSLEY**
Film Reviewer

The guitar toting and gun smoking Mariachi is back in the final installment of Robert Rodriguez's action fueled trilogy, "Once Upon A Time In Mexico." It is a twisty and glorious epic offering just a smidgen too much plot, and not enough character, but Rodriguez's never-ending supply of creativity outshines its shortcomings and makes for one hell of a film-going experience.

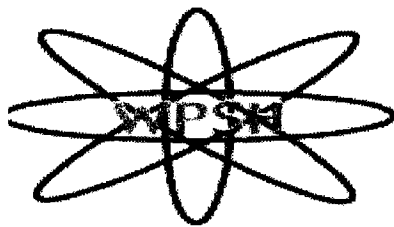
Antonio Banderas returns as, El Mariachi, the dark and vengeful character he so amazingly portrayed in "Desperado." This time he is hired by Agent Sands (Johnny Depp), a seedy and unethical CIA operative, to knock off Marquez, the leader of a revolutionary group out to assassinate El Presidente. The Mariachi humps at the opportunity because Marquez was responsible for the murder of his wife (Salma Hayek) and child. To further complicate matters, a Mexican Mafia man named Brillo, venomously played by Willem DaFoe, is in cahoots with Marquez and tries to hunt down and defeat El Mariachi, his pals, and Agent Sands.

If this sounds somewhat confusing, it is. "Once Upon A Time" In Mexico is a larger, more brazen film than its prequels, "El Mariachi" and "Desperado." The epic sized plot takes away from the real juice of what the Mariachi films are all about, the Mariachi. What makes "Desperado" and "El Mariachi" so beautiful is that they are character driven action films, which is a rare thing in this day and age. The plot of "Once Upon a Time In Mexico" is not bad, it just means that the Mariachi has to share screen time with a hell of a lot more characters. It's a trade off. I just would have liked to see a bit more of the Mariachi.

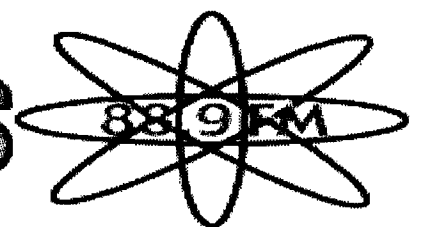
Nevertheless, seeing a film that just exudes a pure love for filmmaking is a fantastic experience. Rodriguez's grand use of the camera perfectly compliments his storytelling abilities. The "Mariachi" films have always been legendary in nature, a kind of filmed version of a tale passed down from generations past. Vibrant style and the overblown action add volumes to the mythic qualities of the Mariachi's experiences.

The performances are nothing less than stellar. DaFoe and Depp are at the top of their games. DaFoe, always the consummate bad guy, transforms himself once again and adds another chapter to his already broad resume. Depp's ability to create quirkiness in characters has always been a strength, and it has never been more effective than in "Once Upon A Time in Mexico." Well, maybe in "Fear in Loathing in Las Vegas." A nice surprise in a small supporting role is Enrique Inglesias. He plays one of Mariachi's buddies, and gives a nicely-paced, steady performance.

Robert Rodriguez's flicks are what film for entertainment is all about. They're intense, thrilling, passionate, and often times, down right hilarious. On the doomed ocean liner that we call Hollywood, "Once Upon A Time In Mexico" proves that intelligence and originality can still be found. You just have to let an independent mind set the right course.



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Next Issue:
 Michelle O'Malley will take a look into our campus radio station, WPSH.

REVIEWED BY: MICHELLE O'MALLEY
 ARTIST/GROUP: JOHN MAYER
 ALBUM TITLE: "HEAVIER THINGS"
 LABEL: AWARE/COLUMBIA RECORDS
 RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER 9, 2003
 GENRE: Pop/Rock
 OVERALL RATING: ***

"Heavier Things" is no wonderland compared to John Mayers' "Room for Squares." The album in its entirety is quite boring and uncatchy. I found myself switching songs quickly hoping to find another "My Stupid Mouth" or "Love Song For No One." Mayer surprises us and brings out his electric guitar making the record sound less raw but too busy. The bells and electric keyboard don't add much. Take away the lyrics and what we have here is some good quality elevator music. Hmmm, now that I think about it, taking away the lyrics wouldn't be so bad. Through many of the songs, I had to strain to hear what he was singing. The best lyric from "Bigger Than My Body" is "Mfudalsady e, love you." The best song is "Come Back To Bed," for obvious reasons. Sorry guys, but the only really attractive thing about this album is the man on the cover.

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