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With lines and situations pulled almost verbatim from its predecessor, the sequel to the surprising hit “Taken” (2008), aptly titled “Taken 2” is disappointing, too familiar and an indicator of the current recipe in Hollywood: if it makes money the first time, just make a sequel.

“Taken 2” picks up not long after retired CIA Agent Brian Mills (Liam Neeson) rescued his kidnapped daughter Kim (Maggie Grace) from Albanian human traffickers in the film’s predecessor. The first leap of faith is to believe Mills is still free to obsessively wash his car after the events in “Taken” that had him kill dozens of bad guys and cause mayhem all over Paris.

But, when Mills takes a job protecting a diplomat in Istanbul, Turkey, his ex-wife Lenore (Famke Jannsen) and Kim pay him a surprise visit for a vacation. Of course, the relatives of the guys Mills dispatched in the first installment come back for revenge, particularly, the father of one bad guy, who is actually never named in the film.

And for good reason because Mills goes on the same rampage with the same dialogue as was seen in “Taken” and unfortunately for Director Olivier Megaton and Writers Luc Besson and Robert Mark Kamen, the novelty has worn off completely.

“Taken 2” carries on like any action circus, with gun play and violence galore and car chases filmed in the shaky style of the “Bourne” trilogy. Since those films became a huge success several years ago, it seems many films since have borrowed their style.

Repetitiveness seems to be the major flaw of “Taken 2” right down to rehashing the same dialogue as “Taken” and using music from other films while offering nothing new. Neeson is never depicted running or doing things beyond stand-still hand-to-hand combat, which is undoubtedly a product of his age.

The movie uses two songs from the 2011 film “Drive,” which is honestly a much better film all around and just made me want to watch that movie instead.

Neeson’s personality and acting chops as well as his gruff voice gave his Mills character surprising gravitas for the first movie. It was an odd change of pace for the otherwise outstanding actor who has played great dramatic roles in the past (most notably Oskar Schindler in 1993’s “Schindler’s List”).

The writers faced the daunting challenge of how to move the story from “Taken” into a sequel, but failed on almost all accounts. Of course it’s entertaining enough if you love action films, but you’d be better off just popping “Taken” in on your home DVD player.

In one scene, Neeson actually has to recite lines that have him counting out loud while uttering “birds” and “shift to second” when he’s kidnapped and blindfolded in a van trying to memorize the van’s movements.

Despite his age, Neeson is depicted as having almost no issues dealing with the impossible scenarios he’s put in, nor the bad guys with guns who are half his age. In “Taken” he was shot, stabbed and cut numerous times, but nothing of the sort happens here.

In the third act, when he growls, “I’m tired of it all,” I felt sympathetic. Frankly, by the time it reached somewhat of a climax, I was tired of it all too.

“Taken” was admittedly completely implausible but highly entertaining and actually interesting. It’s too bad Hollywood can’t leave well enough alone anymore.

“Taken 2” is now playing in local theaters and is rated ‘R’ with a runtime of 91 minutes.

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