With the Nimrod Antal-directed PREDATORS on the way, the time is perfect to look back at PREDATOR 2, a worthy follow-up featuring the extraterrestrial huntsman who singlehandedly brought down an entire team of commando elite in the 1987 original. In the second installment, released in 1990, a new alien hunter prowls the crime-infested streets of Los Angeles searching for worthy trophies to add to its immense collection.

With the temperature rising to the boiling point, gang warfare has escalated to a whole new level of extreme violence. The flick opens in the middle of an intense shootout between the outnumbered police and an overpowering drug gang. The reckless Lieutenant Mike Harrigan (Danny Glover) joins the blazing gunfire, fearlessly shooting down the drug lords. The defeated gang members desperately retreat to a nearby building, where the savage hunter eagerly awaits them.

The criminals are later discovered hung upside down with their spinal columns and skulls missing. Upon viewing the gruesome massacre, Harrigan immediately realizes this isn't the work of a rival gang. His superiors want him to stay off the case, but Harrigan recognizes something is suspicious with the arrival of government agent Peter Keyes (Gary Busey).

A power struggle develops between Harrigan and Keyes as they pursue their invisible alien adversary. Busey turns in an excellent performance as the shadowy government agent in charge of capturing the unstoppable creature. Glover is the perfect choice as Mike Harrigan, a tougher yet cynical variation on Glover’s other action persona, Sergeant Roger Murtaugh from the LETHAL WEAPON series. Glover may not be as physically imposing as original star Arnold Schwarzenegger, but he doesn’t need to be, because of his relentless personality.

During the shooting of the first film, the alien hunter was supposed to be played by Jean-Claude Van Damme. After the Muscles from Brussels was replaced by Kevin Peter Hall, the monster

suit needed fixing, and due to financial setbacks, the film went on hiatus, giving special FX wizard Stan Winston a necessary break to redo the costume. With the sequel, the FX and props team was given substantial time to conjure up a new arsenal of weapons for the invisible hunter. The Predator has a lot more to do with a retractable spear, a projectile net, and my personal favorite, the Frisbee blade.

The film has many action setpieces, such as the subway attack frenzy, but one particular scene always stands out for me. Things are kicked into high gear when Harrigan and Keyes stumble unto the Predator's hideout at a slaughterhouse facility. Keyes and his team think they have the upper hand, underestimating their enemy, as they barge in with high-artillery weapons. The Predator appears to enjoy the subsequent killing spree, knocking down its opponents one by one. The sequence concludes with an all-out brawl between Harrigan and the Predator as they bloodily hack away at each other.

PREDATOR screenwriters Jim and John Thomas returned for the successor, taking a risky chance to do something different. In this writer's opinion, PREDATOR was like watching three movies in one: The first act introduces a commando team on a covert mission; the second act develops into a slasher movie; and the conclusion is a survival-of-the-fittest contest between invader and human. In part two, the Thomas brothers take a satirical jab at Los Angeles by making humorous observations—everyone in LA seems to be carrying a gun—while portraying the street gangs in a cartoonish manner. It seems unnecessary, though, that the story is set in the "future" of 1997.

Take a closer look in the Predator's spaceship and you will find an Alien skull in the trophy room. The crossover battle of ALIENS VS. PREDATOR has progressed through comic-book adaptations, video games and two movies. The Aliens aren't the only species the Predators have taken on: In the comics, the hunters have gone up against pirates, grizzly bears and even the dynamic duo, Batman and Robin.

Audiences will witness the trophy hunters closer to their home turf on July 9: In PREDATORS, an abducted group of strangers find themselves on a jungle planet, stalked by the merciless alien race. In a plotline conceived by producer Robert Rodriguez of PLANET TERROR, the Predators will now go head-to-head with a Yakuza, cold-hearted mercenaries and a violent man named Cuchillo (played by Rodriguez regular Danny Trejo).

But PREDATOR 2 also did its part to further the alien hunters' mythology. From start to finish,

the flick is heavily pumped with visceral setpieces, while contributing many new wrinkles to the franchise.

{jcomments on}