

## Review: Taken 2

By [Stephen Rodwell](#)

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**Director:** Olivier Megaton

**Rating:** ★☆☆☆☆

**Length:** 92 minutes

**Starring:** Liam Neeson, Maggie Grace

In a packed viewing at the York Picturehouse this week rows of chairs visibly shook from fits of uncontrollable laughter. Not quite the reaction you'd expect from the sequel to 2008's ultra-violent action thriller, *Taken*.

It wasn't that the audience had all become delirious some time between the pre-film trailers and the opening credits. Rather, they were confronted with a script so baffling dumb (Luc Besson, writer of *The Fifth Element* and *Léon*, really should have done better) and performances just as half-arsed and ridiculous, that the thriller they'd come to see was inexplicably turned into one of this year's best comedies.

That's not to say that *Taken 2* should ever be recommended. Any bursts of laughter you heard were easily muted by the chorus of sighs that echoed around the cinema. It's the tedious premise of the film, virtually copy and pasted from the first of the series (with the slightly adventurous twist of it being in a Turkish setting this time), that goes some way to helping explain the frustration that everyone else and I felt. For those unfamiliar with the actually incredibly entertaining prequel, the plot is as follows: someone is carelessly taken, an angry Liam Neeson requests that the person not be taken (which, whilst seemingly polite and fair, proves to be ineffective), from which follows a dragged-out affair in which old men chase each other around a city until the person is released, only to find said person roaming around Europe's most dangerous streets ten minutes later.

For anyone left thinking that the synopsis actually sounded rather good, and that watching old men chase each other around for an hour and a half might be the best way to spend this Friday night, I can thankfully save you the trouble by summing up what *Taken 2* is really all about with only two (spoiler-free) scenes.

In the first, Liam Neeson, taking a bundle of cash for a routine bodyguard job (apparently 60-year old bodyguards are in high demand these days), his eyes practically mutating into comically large dollar signs, chuckles to himself in a manner not unlike some of the more evil Bond villains. It's as if the film had paused suddenly so as to clarify for us, if we didn't already know, why *Taken 2* was made, and I'll give you a clue, it wasn't because anyone wanted it to happen.

And the lack of passion for the movie really shows. Action sequences, suffering disastrously from the money-minded move down to a "12A" rating, consist of headache-inducing camera-work that barely makes the repetitive and uninteresting choreography viewable (perhaps something to be grateful for).

The soundtrack, a possible lifeline for the lacklustre fighting scenes, was both dull and irritatingly inappropriate for the streets of Istanbul, as well as being strangely reminiscent and sometimes even blatantly plagiaristic of 2011's *Drive*. That's not even to mention the countless plot-holes, shoddy acting, and the inability of the female leads to button up their shirts for pretty much the entire movie.

The second scene that tells you everything you need to know about *Taken 2* comes in the last few minutes, by which time the audience had started talking openly without regard for cinema etiquette, their minds wandering to other more exciting things, such as what to make for dinner. With the blurry action scenes finally reaching their climax, our ageing star, in the only genuinely believable line of dialogue in the film, whimpers to his dim-witted rival: "I am tired...tired of it all". So are we Liam, so are we.

Yet, regardless of the flurry of unforgiving criticism flooding in, the sequel, inventively named *Taken 3*, is already in the works – a no-brainer really considering that *Taken 2* has brought in over \$200 million world-wide already. The plot looks set to follow the complex "winning" formula set out by the previous two and, whilst I've spend the last few minutes trying to convince you that *Taken 2* is certainly not a good film, I'll probably end up going to see it, just like everyone else, in the vain hope that it might restore the magic of the first in the series. Here's hoping.



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