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'T2' doesn't pack the same rush as its 1996 precursor

Riotous 'Trainspotting' came out 21 years ago, and its characters didn't age so well

Even the worst things that happen in one's youth can be exhilarating — intoxicating — especially if there's a pounding soundtrack in the background playing Iggy Pop's "Lust for Life."

But a bunch of 46-year-olds knocking heads, snorting coke and making sex tapes for blackmail? Not so much.

We've moved on; why haven't they?

"T2 Trainspotting" is director Danny Boyle's follow-up to his riotous T1, "Trainspotting," the iconic, head-banging, Cool Britannia trip through Edinburgh, Scotland's 90's drug scene. Grimy, rambunctious and packed with overt references to "A Clockwork Orange," 1996's "Trainspotting" let us believe there was nowhere to go but up for Boyle's decidedly down-and-out junkies. T1 ended

with Mark Renton (Ewan McGregor, the "Star Wars" prequels) sneaking out on his posse — Spud (Ewen Bremner), "Sick Boy" Simon (Jonny Lee Miller, "Elementary") and Begbie (Robert Carlyle) — taking off with the proceeds of their drug heist.

Why didn't Renton just ride off into the pre-millennium sunset and stay there? (He could have lived a long and happy life as, say, Ewan McGregor.)

"T2" is a perfectly acceptable movie. But what we really want is the same kind of rush that T1 delivered 20 years ago. It doesn't happen.

Now 20 years later and after his mother's death, Renton returns home, divorced, childless, unemployed and living in his childhood bedroom with the



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locomotive wallpaper.

Broke and broken, no one from the old gang has aged well.

Robert Carlyle, the heartthrob in "The Full Monty," looks like Mike Ditka and acts like Joe Pesci as the violently volatile Begbie. Early in "T2," Begbie is an inmate at one of Her Majesty's prisons. His terrified and ineffective counsel has mishandled his appeal. Begbie arranges for another inmate to stab him and then is transferred to a hospital. He escapes after conning

the security guard into leaving the room. Begbie goes straight home, longing to spend quality time with his university-bound son by committing burglaries together. He is

also ready to avenge Renton's betrayal.

"Sick Boy" Simon has traded his heroin addiction for cocaine. He runs his late aunt's pub (where customers are scarce) as a sideline to his pornography blackmail business. His accomplice and sometime romantic partner is a young prostitute from Bulgaria, Veronika (Anjela Nedyalkova).

Though half the men's age, Veronika is clearly the adult among them. Renton, Simon and Spud are all besotted by her.

Everything is not immediately forgiven between Simon and Renton. When Renton offers Simon the share of the money he filched that "rightfully" belongs to Simon, the realization of the lost opportunities the money represents hits Simon hard. "What am I supposed to do with this?" he spits back at Renton, "Buy a f***ing time machine?"

The improbable Spud is the Boswell of this coterie of coke-heads. Obviously intended as a stand-in for the author of the original novel "Trainspotting," Irvine Welsh, Spud is urged by Renton to choose an addiction other than heroin. Spud chooses writing. It proves to be his salvation.

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"You're a tourist of your own youth," Simon says of Renton's return to Edinburgh, pretty much summing up the "T2" sequel as well.

This train has left the station.