Detective Chinatown 2 pulls no punches in plot or in worldview

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You don't really have a choice, because the dialogue is so rapid-fire that if you look away for a second, you'll miss something in the intricate plot.  
The sequel to the 2015 hit is set in New York as opposed to Bangkok. The film displays stunning views of New York along with car smash-ups and crunching kung fu street fights, including one amusing scene where one of the bad guys is hit in his nether region and is made to appear to be moonwalking Michael Jackson style.  
The movie, produced by Beijing's Wanda Pictures, is timed to open Friday for Chinese New Year in China and across North America, with Warner Bros handling the North American distribution. It is the second collaboration between the two companies after last year's hit   
The sequel reunites writer/director Chen Sicheng with the hyperactive Tang Ren (Wang Baoqiang), who provides the brawn while dressed like a 1970s pimp, and Qin Feng (Liu Haoran), who with his photographic memory is the brains of the operation.  
"Shooting this film is like running 10 marathons," Wang said at the Beijing premiere on Feb 8. "I lost a lot of weight, and maybe I am slim enough to be a model to walk the Victoria's Secret runway!"  
The plot centers on a bunch of 20 or so amateur sleuths who are in New York for an "International Detectives Alliance" gathering. Some use a smartphone app called Crimaster. (I don't know why there's no letter "e" in the app's spelling.)  
They are tasked with solving a notorious crime: The son of "Uncle Qi", the "Godfather of Chinatown" in New York, is murdered by a serial killer who bases his spree on the   
The NYPD also is trying to solve the case, which leads to some humorous run-ins.  
Liu's handsome face makes him the de facto male lead (both the movie's female and male characters find him attractive), while the captivating NYPD Detective Chen Ying (Natasha Liu Nardizzo of Australia) is his female counterpart. She moves effortlessly between perfect English and Mandarin.  
The plot isn't shy about caricaturing Americans, many of whom are oversized and plodding. And there is plenty of gunplay.  
In one scene, another of the film's stars (a hapless suspect in the killings, played by veteran actor Xiao Yang), is teaching Chinese to a class of adult students when he is interrupted by Tang and Qin, and Tang starts beating him. The attack is stopped when the 20 or so students point their guns simultaneously.  
In another, the fleeing amateur detectives end up in a biker bar. When their Chinese nemeses (not detectives but reward-seekers) show up and pull guns on them, each biker draws his own big gun to back them off.  
All the pistol-packing seemed odd for a city with strict gun laws, but hey, it's a movie.  
There also is a police chief who is made to look and speak like, well, US President Donald Trump. If you missed that reference, the portrait of Trump behind the chief reinforced it.  
Chinese stereotypes also appear: Tang Ren has a gold tooth, and there are plenty of gangsters wearing kung fu Tang suits.  
The film takes some liberties with locations. One chase scene starts downtown by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, and in the next frame, we're in Grand Central Station in midtown. Even an on-time express train wouldn't have gotten there that fast.  
I was impressed how Chen Sicheng managed to film a raucous chase scene in Times Square featuring a horse-drawn carriage.  
"In one word: expensive," Chen told The Wrap when discussing filming in New York. "It's the most investment in any movie throughout my career but the shortest time frame – only 40 days. I wondered why some of the Hollywood movies are such big budget and how would they spend it. Now I know."  
The original   
Be sure to follow the plot to the end and sit through the credit roll, because it is quite entertaining in a Broadway kind of way.

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