The long, long-awaited sequel to Trainspotting is all about four fortysomethings realising that they aren’t as young as they used to be, so it’s appropriate that the film itself should feel distinctly middle-aged compared to its youthful predecessor. T2 Trainspotting, to use its perplexing title, is slower and creakier than Trainspotting. It’s not as good-looking, it’s more conventional, and it’s prone to getting maudlin about times gone by. Depending on how forgiving you are – and how old you are – you’ll either be impressed that it has incorporated the theme of ageing into its milder tone and gentler pacing, or you’ll be disappointed that it isn’t the white-knuckle rollercoaster ride that Trainspotting was.

To be fair, not many films are. Adapted from Irvine Welsh’s cult novel about a group of heroin-addicted Edinburgh low-lifes, 1996’s stylishly scabrous tragicomedy bombarded the viewer with grotesque characters and explosive anecdotes, using captions, voiceover, and supremely well-chosen songs – Iggy Pop’s Lust for Life, Lou Reed’s Perfect Day, Underworld’s Born Slippy – to jam in yet more information. If you had left the cinema after the opening 10 minutes, you still would have got your money’s worth.

The sequel is a mellower affair. Even though it has the same director (Danny Boyle) and screenwriter (John Hodge), it cuts back on the narration and the captions, and it takes quite a while to fill us in on where the characters are and what they’ve been up to. Amazingly, they are all still alive. Renton (Ewan McGregor) has been living drug-free in Amsterdam for the past 20 years, but is returning to Edinburgh following his mother’s death. The hapless Spud (Ewen Bremner) has been trying and failing to stay away from heroin, losing touch with a wife and son in the process. Begbie (Robert Carlyle) has been in prison, where his waistline, his moustache and his violent streak have all expanded. And Sick Boy (Jonny Lee Miller) has been snorting cocaine, running his aunt’s grotty pub, and blackmailing the clients of a Bulgarian prostitute (Anjela Nedyalkova).

**A final hit**

The last time these four men were in the same room was when Renton was sneaking out of it with a hold-all full of stolen cash, so he isn’t exactly welcomed back to Scotland with open arms. Sick Boy asks him to help turn the pub into a brothel, purely so that he can betray Renton further down the line. Begbie, meanwhile, is planning a less subtle revenge involving a Stanley knife and a sledgehammer.