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Editor-in-Chief

Dr. Vishwanath Bite

Managing Editor

Madhuri Bite

www.the-criterion.com
criterionejournal@gmail.com

Bring Back Malone

Edgar Rider

"Okay class we are going to watch some Kurosawa. Remember we will have a test on the prior work of Fellini, Bergman and Godard." Professor Sturgess is an intellectual film professor. He spent his whole life watching quality films.

Sammy and Roger are taking this class not because they want to but sort of have to. Although they are film majors they wish there was a separate department for just entertainment. Their love of action movies drove them into the fine arts department. But something is missing no car chase or pyrotechnic class in the semester schedule.

During a break, the professor walks over to Sammy and Roger. "What are you guys watching?"

Sammy and Roger look up as if busted. The professor grabs the DVD boxes . "These are the names of the movies 'Deep Trouble' and the sequel 'Deeper Trouble'. One word. Terrible. You could spend your time watching the greatest films by some of the greatest directors. And you spend your time on earth watching Hank Malone movies. He's not even a good actor."

"These movies are awesome." Sammy says impressed by his own lack of verbosity.

"Pure nostalgic bliss." Roger smiles in agreement.

"Pure crap. More like it." The professor adds shaking his head. "This guy Malone he's out of shape and skinny. He doesn't even look like an action star."

"Yeah that's exactly why we like him. He's like a poor man's Bruce Willis."

"Yeah man. Anyway what was I saying. Hank Malone lives here. We gotta do a movie with this guy. We gotta write a movie just for him. What about it man a major comeback .Man that's it. We should call it 'Back In Business'. Remember when he used to say...." Roger is cut off by Sammy.

"That's already been taken. And yeah I remember. You're right. Yeah we gotta find that guy." Sammy agrees.

"Can I borrow these movies." Professor Sturgess asks. Roger and Sammy raise no objection. Professor Sturgess grabs the movies and walks back up to the podium. He pulls

the microphone closer making sure everyone can hear him. “Okay class. Pay attention. I mean close attention. This is what I refer to as bad film making, bad acting and bad direction. Bad. Bad. So bad. Lets watch a scene from Deeper Trouble.” Half the class cheers the more serious part of the class groans. “I know some of you know about quality films but we need to show the other example. First of all let me say critics brutally and rightfully so attacked his other commercial flops ‘Take This and Take That’. Can you believe that those are the actual titles. Let’s watch.”

On the film screen , footage shows Hank talking with an attractive actress. She looks positively disgusted by Hank and even more disgusted that she has to partake in this type of movie.

“You’re an idiot Malone.” The actress says twirling her hair back in an awkward fashion.

Hank tips his patented dusty hat down as if in a sign of respect. “Maybe but I’m, good with a gun.” He takes his gun out of his holster slides another clip in. “Heads Up.” Hank says warning the actress. The woman screams Hank raises his gun and shoots the intruder dead with one impressive shot. Hank yells out and tips his hat once more “Back to business.”

A group of assassins surround Hank. The actress passes out in an overly dramatic fashion. Hank uses his foot and pushes her aside. Suddenly out of nowhere Janitor Reed appears. Janitor Reed has appeared in films with Hank toward the end of his career. The studio felt that Hank needed a partner in action and Hank felt it was one of the studios better ideas.

Janitor Reed exclaims, “Did somebody call for a Janitor. Always expect the janitor to clean up.” Janitor Reed pulls out an AK. He opens up several rounds with bodies scattering. Some of the class breaks out in further applause. Suddenly the university screen goes blank. Some of the other students breathe a sigh of relief.

“That’s enough.” The Professor says turning the video off. “Class see what I mean.” He rubs the end of his glasses with a Kleenex and squints his eyes. He acts as if the film caused them a burning sensation. “Class you are dismissed.” The students scatter as the professor looks at his watch thinking to himself, ‘Thank God this is over’.

As Roger and Sammy exit the door, the professor interrupts them. “That guy Malone needs to be in a different movie. If you guys can accomplish that then you guys could become actual filmmakers or maybe get a decent grade for once in your lives.”

Sammy looks surprised, “Did you hear that.”

Roger grabs an enquire type tabloid “Yeah, It says here in this magazine....Hank’s real name is Herschell Puplick and he lives here across town and hangs out in this dive bar.”

Sammy and Roger tell the rest of their friends: Jake is their fateful key grip and Caprice is a make up designer. Sammy and Roger ask them to meet them at the pub. They are all about to meet their hero Hank in the flesh. Except Caprice who wouldn’t know Malone from Norris. She is a very attractive fiery red head who ends up taking charge every once in awhile. She is one of the boys and doesn’t mind keeping the boys in line. Jake doesn’t say a lot just carries equipment.

Just like Hank does in his bad detective movies, they spoke to the owner of the local pub, a dingy little dive, called the Last Round. “Yeah he comes in here every Thursday sits over there. The owner points to a dimly lit corner. “By himself. Bastard.”

Tuesday rolls into Thursday quickly. As they walk in, they see Hank sitting by himself. He looks like just like he does in the movies with his hat and trench-coat. Hank Malone is talking to his beer. Hank looks even more ruffled then in ‘Take This’ or even ‘Take That’. The after shadow on his face has grown thicker. His demeanor has become even more severe. Hank looks at his beer and grimaces, “That’s not funny don’t say things like that.

Sammy asks,” Hey are you talking to your beer.”

“This is Hermy. Who are you guys?” Hank looks up doesn’t recognize anyone. Although it has been a rough night with many drinks. He could know these people but it’s been a long week.

Roger begins his pitch to Hank. “We’re film students. We are big fans. We got this idea. Were going to change your world Hank. . We’re going to get people to see you in a whole new light.”

Hank looks at his beer in a condescending manner. “Film students. Game changers. Right Hermy.” Hank chuckles sipping on his beer. He mumbles something incoherent to Hermy.

Sammy interrogates, “What’s your beer saying to you now.”

Hank Malone mumbles more random nonsense and then smiles, “Drink me.”

Jake looks around at his friend, "This guy is a little whacked." Hank ignores them staring at his beer.

Caprice asks Malone "Must kinda suck to be forgotten. No more guns no car chases."

Roger disagrees, "That never goes out of style."

Hank slouches over, doesn't respond and continues slurping his drink in an obnoxious manner.

"C'mon, its Hank Malone give the guy some respect."

Caprice orders beers for her and everyone else. Before anyone else can grab one she is done with her first.

"Anyway we have a project for you. It'll put you back on the map. At least we think. What do you say?"

"One more movie man."

"Yeah one more time. One more time. Hank. Hank." Sammy tries to incite the crowded bar but gets a lackluster response.

Hank looks back up and then looks back at his drink. "I don't need it anymore. Don't want it anymore right Hermy."

"Let me give you a card." Sammy hands Hank a card. Hank puts it in his pocket without even looking at it. "Think about it." Sammy adds.

"We need to find Janitor Reed.' Roger pats Hank on the back.

"Who's Janitor Reed?" Caprice asks admittedly she is not an avid Malone fan.

"It was his partner. He was so cool, he would just appear and kick ass. You'll understand when you meet him. A real tough guy."

Hank doesn't even respond barely looks up and then continues his conversation with his drink.

"Will be in touch."

"See ya."

Hank replies “Yup.” He continues mumbling towards Hermy’s direction.

Janitor Reed whose real name is Irwin Julius lives in a rent controlled apartment. As Sammy, Roger, Jake and Caprice pull up in there own version of a mystery van. They see a different Janitor Reed in a flower hat working in the garden. Janitor Reed looks like a shell of his former self wearing a baggy wife beater and plaid pants. He holds his water pouring it delicately.

“Mr. Julius Didn’t you once play Janitor Reed in Hank Malone movies.” Roger asks.

“That was long ago.” Janitor Reed continues watering. He rubs the end of the plant. “Tsk , tsk not coming along.”

“What happened to you guys? Those movies man. They were awesome.”

“Hank happened man. Hank happened.” Janitor Reed takes a hoe and starts scraping the dirt from the surrounding flowers.

“What do you mean?”

“He changed. His confidence faded.”

“Can you explain further man.”

Irwin begins telling the story. According to Irwin, Hank met a young lady named Dorothy. She had two beautiful daughters from a previous marriage. Hank adored Dorothy and her two girls. One day they went to the park. A well known mafia man Victor Alfonse got out of his limousine.

He tried to offer Hank a contract. A real job working for the mob. Hank refused. Victor became angry. Hank and Victor decided to exchange blows. Right in front of Dorothy and her two girls. The three stood there in horror unable to scream.

Victor grabbed his gun out of his coat. He fires three shots killing the three. The best way to get to a man is to get to his women first .

Hank grabs his gun. He tries to fire nothing but blanks.

“Oh no prop gun.”

Victor smiles knowing Hank will live out his days in agony. Victor knocks him out cold.

Hank awakens to find his three girls covered in blood. He sobs uncontrollably. His world has been shaken. The violence of the real world has stopped him cold.

Irwin shakes his head. "Never the same." Irwin continues watering the plants. Irwin looks at the four young people. He points to his garden. "Can you guys help." Sammy, Roger, Jake and Caprice start helping pull up weeds from his garden. "I don't know man the studio asked him to make more movies. He just threw up his hands. I'm out."

Sammy listens. "We got this idea. See what you guys need is for people to see you and your movies in a new light." Sammy explains his idea of deconstructing the action formula.

Jake almost steps on some flowers. Irwin stops him with a menacing stare. "Watch my petunias." Irwin grabs a Hoe starts raking back and forth, "I'll talk to him."

"Right on. Man I am telling you this will put you guys back on the map."

"I'll talk to him."

Alone in his hotel room, the busy street surrounding his decaying situation, Hank grabs his Jack Daniels drinks it straight out of the bottle. He pulls out the card that Sammy gave to him. Hank Malone stares at the card that says 'One More Time Productions.'

Hank gets a phone call. He puts up to his ear and whispers. "Yup. Alright. Where? Alright the usual warehouse. He gathers his coat and heads out the door.

The warehouse is not far. He hails for a taxi cab. The cab arrives instantaneous. He waits for the driver to turn around and takes another drink.

He enters an abandoned warehouse. His instincts tell him he should be careful.

"Hank." Hank turns and hears a voice surround him from the dark. He instinctually puts his hand in his pocket but remembers this is no movie. And anyway he forgot to bring his gun. "Damn."

Hank turns around Janitor Reed is standing waiting in the shadows. Hank doesn't know whether to embrace him or take a swing. They have always been this way like two lost brothers who don't know how to reconnect.

“Reed.” Hank answers his voice shaken.

“You know why I am here.”

“Yeah gotta feelin.” Hank takes another drink wipes the liquor from his mouth with his shirt in an uncouth way.

“Those kids. You know the film students. This could be it Hank our comeback or our one last farewell let’s do it right man.”

“It’s a student film. Who’s going to see it?”

Janitor Reed looks into the other room and nods his head like ‘I didn’t say that.’ In the other room the crew sits quiet filming the scene .Once Hank remarks they turn to each other a little annoyed but Sammy still keeps filming. Roger holds up his finger for the rest to be quiet.

“One last time. For Dorothy she would have wanted that way man. One last send off.” Janitor Reed says finishing his pep talk.

“Let’s go with it.” Hank concludes. “I’ll tell the guys.”

“He’s in,” Sammy slaps Roger on the back.

“We got it,” Roger concludes whispering.

“This footage is gonna be great. It’s like a different kind of action movie.” Sammy looks through the hole into the other room. Reed walks out of the room waving slightly.

“Wait there’s more.” Roger moves the camera lens to get a close up shot

Hank pulls out a picture of Dorothy and the two girls sits and stares at it. He takes another drink. Vodka causes him to fade to black. The camera lens fades as well.

The next day during class, Hank appears in the classroom. Professor Sturgess looks disgusted “Guys I’m in.”

“Yeah Malone is in.’

“What about Reed.”

"Shh we already know." Sammy whispers to Roger.

"Let me make that call he'll be here." Hank adds.

"The next scene is in a supermarket." Roger chimes in.

"The next." Sammy almost gives the real movie away.

"I mean the first."

Wally's Supermarket is the least likely of places for a Hank Malone movie. Malone looks through the aisles. He grabs a shopping cart puts a box of cornflakes in it. He shakes it "They don't pack it in like they used to."

Inside the supermarket a band of thieves break into. What the film crew doesn't understand is that the line between reality and fantasy in film-making is about to collide. Some action heroes are the real deal and when faced with a real action threat they always come prepared or at least have a back up plan.

"Everybody down." A robber yells out .

"You've got to be kidding me." Hank says looking at the crew. "You guys gotta be kidding. These guys don't look like real robbers." Hank grabs a vodka flask begins drinking it whispers into the flask.

Who you talking to now.

"Esmerelda."

A robber knocks Hank down hitting him with his revolver. Another robber tackles the key grip his camera equipment falls over. Caprice is hit with a right cross. The whole crew falls down like linked peer dominoes.

Hank gets back up. Grabs something under his coat. "Put the scripts down fellas time to improvise. " Malone says pulling out his revolver once again
Gotta make a call first. "This is a prop gun but they don't know that yet."

Within a few minutes his legendary sidekick appears.

Janitor Reed yells out “You never know what’s going down on set. Clean up Isle 3.” He grabs a shotgun from his bag. Janitor Reed shakes Hanks hand “One more time eh Hank.”

Yep one more time.” Hank nods back.

“I thought this was all make- believe.” Jake asks

“Not in some countries the action is for real.” Hank Malone grabs his gun “Should have recognized the signs. Should have been paying attention.” He looks at Jake momentarily “Key grip its time to party. You know how to use these.” He shows him a butterfly knife.

The Key grip nods his head not carrying some boxes and a light.

“Put the lighting equipment down man”. “Here you ever used one of these .” Hank hands Jake a grenade.

“Not really dude.”

“Pull the pin but make sure you throw it after.” Hank says and holds his hat preventing it from falling off. He is bracing himself for more random chaos.

“Dude this is awesome.” Jake says brilliantly concluding throws the grenade therefore eliminating Isle number 3.

Janitor Reed takes a special type of machine gun out and mows down the robbers in particulary bad slow motion. A few of the robbers escape the assault.

Sammy, Roger, Jake and Caprice are a bloody mess.

Hank turns to Sammy “You wanted me to be in your kind of movie. Now your in mine. Keep it rolling. We’re back in business. “

Janitor Reed opens his case again hands out some guns and various other weapons.

“One for each of you take your pick.” He pulls out a blade hands it to Jake. “Hey Boom mike operator. Here put this on top of the mic. You can be like the grim reaper scythe and all. It’ll give a nice effect.

Reed hands Caprice an uzi. Caprice shakes her head. “Don’ t need a weapon. Just these.” She stretches her legs almost doing a crane kick. Caprice takes out two guys with one

spin kick. She elbows two guys. Takes two of their heads smashes them together. Several bodies surround her as she looks up. Even Janitor Reed and Hank look impressed.

“Where did you learn that,” Hank asks

“Just a little something I picked up.”

“Damn.” Janitor Reed says. Glad you’re in our team.”

Hank and Janitor Reed look at each other both smile.

In slow motion the crew attacks the robbers. Each crew member starts fighting. Jake grabs the boom mic slices the throat of an attacker. He hears the sound effects of the throat slash amplified “That’s awesome.” He records it the rest of the crew listens extremely impressed

The crew is victorious the congratulations are short.

Hank looks at the crew. “You were in my kind of movie I guess I’ll try yours.”

"That's just it Hank not a completely different movie it just has a twist." Sammy adds knowing he has captured something special.

The crew switches to a different scene. They are back at the park where Hank’s lady friend was killed. The crew begins filming .The rain hits Malone “ I got to go now. it’s over. “ Malone tips his hat tries to deflect the rain with his coat. “ I have had a good career its time. “

“Hank good working with you again man.” Janitor Reed chimes in one last jab for good measure.

“What are you going to do” Hank asks.

“Time for my own sequel. By the way man I did you one last favor.” Janitor Reed says smiling.

“What favor.”

“Watch the trailer after the show.”

On the projection screen, the scene appears cut with Hank and Janitor Reed talking about making a comeback.

The next scene is the brutal robbery. The last scene is Hank saying goodbye in the rain. Hank throws his gun in the lake and the audience cries with him.

Janitor Reed and Malone share an awkward brotherly embrace and then a firm handshake.

Professor Sturgess looks around at the tearful audience and still doesn't really get it. "What was the deal with that robbery scene worst special effects I have ever seen."

Roger pulls Sammy to the side. "Do you realize we killed people."

"Nobody will ever know. To them its make-believe. You heard the professor say 'terrible effects.'" Sammy smiles.

On the screen after the movie a trailer appears. Janitor Reed is shown walking into a room full of mobsters. Victor sits at his desk.

"This is for Hank." Janitor Reed pulls out an Uzi; Victor tries to run blood splatters the window.

The caption reads Coming Soon Janitor Reed in 'Served Up Cold'. The title preserves the nostalgia effect.

"So much for a different kind of movie." The professor comes back over them and shakes his head. "As for that guy Hank he still sucks. The most I can say about this film is you guys pass."

"Some people just don't get it." Jake adds and the room explodes with laughter.

Sammy and Roger decide to go relieve themselves as they exit the restroom in the background they see a man standing there in a Hawaiian shirt his hair is cut and clean shaven. They almost don't recognize him and then realize its Hank. He has a name tag on his shirt that says 'Hersch'.

"Hey Hank. What's going on man come join us." Sammy asks.

After watching the film Hank chuckles, "So you guys were filming all along." He pauses and switches his track. "Reed came through he got 'em. I told you man the line gets blurred."

"You look different what's the deal man. Talk to us." Sammy adds.

Roger chimes in. “Where you going. Your name tag. You going by Hersch now.”

Hank runs his finger across the name tag. “Yeah just call me the Hersch. “ He expands his shirt once more further emphasizing his name tag. “Looks like I’m going to Florida. I think I’m going into the antique business “He looks at the movie screen “Don’t tell anyone I was here. Let them remember me that way.” Hank shakes their hands.

Before leaving, Hank takes a sip out of his umbrella drink and begins singing Pina Colada ‘If you like Pina Colada getting caught in the rain’.

He walks out the door ready to face a different kind of life and a different kind of world.

THE END OR IS IT