

ENTERTAINMENT

Movie review

Trainspotting injects reality of drugs into veins

By Peter Marval

In a year of pitifully drab movies, the team that gave us the brilliant dark comedy *Shallow Grave* returns with *Trainspotting*, a delightfully disturbing film about heroin addiction.

In the opening scenes of *Trainspotting* (the title refers to the British pastime of counting trains — a metaphor for indulging in a useless activity that gives one's life a sense of purpose), the audience is introduced to the film's anti-hero, Mark Renton (Ewan McGregor), who rejects material possessions and a culture he views as sick and stifling.

Renton escapes through drugs — primarily heroin. "I choose not to choose life, I chose something else," he declares, as he and his friends shoot up in an Edinburgh flat. "And the reasons? There are no reasons. Who needs reasons when you've got heroin?"

The film, based on a novel by Irvine Welsh, focuses on Renton and his buddies, a group of crooks, liars and psychos.

There's Spud (Ewen Bremner), who partakes in the funniest scene in the film when he confronts a job interview panel while on speed; Sick Boy (Johny Lee Miller), an off-the-mark philosopher; Tommy (Kevin McKidd), who starts off clean, but eventually caves



BUZZED — From left to right, Spud (Ewen Bremner), Mark Renton (Ewan McGregor), and Begbie (Robert Carlyle) star in *Trainspotting*.
(Alliance Releasing)

in; and Begbie (Robert Carlyle), who boasts that he doesn't need to use drugs, but gets a kick out of beating the hell out of people.

The movie, which became a huge phenomenon in England, where it is the second highest grossing British film after *Four Weddings and a*

Funeral, successfully gets across the surreality of being in a junkie's head.

One scene has Renton disappearing into Scotland's filthiest public toilet into a deep blue pool while trying to rescue two opium suppositories.

Most of all, *Trainspotting* does a superb job of illustrating the realities of drug use.

"Take the best orgasm you ever had, multiply by 1,000 and you're still nowhere near it," Renton assures us about heroin use. There are no worries about the problems and concerns of everyday life, just where the next hit is going to come from.

At the same time, the film does not cheat us of the horror and anguish of real-life drug addiction. We are made party to the ghastly accidental death of an addict's neglected infant, the consequences of being caught by the law, and the nightmare-like hallucinations of withdrawal.

Diverse musical talents from Elicita to New Order contribute to the film's soundtrack, adding dimension to scenes — for example, the ironic *Perfect Day* by Lou Reed, during an overdose by Renton.

Hilariously funny one moment and graphically tragic the next, *Trainspotting* is exciting, energetic and thought-provoking, but definitely not for the timid. 🍑🍑🍑🍑