

Tarantino's latest film well worth the wait

The 'Pulp Fiction' director took five years to bring his new film, 'Kill Bill: Volume 1' to the big screen

By Steven Neuman
Freelance Writer

Up until last Sunday, it had been five years since a Quentin Tarantino film was in the theaters. If I had to wait another five, 10, or 20 years for the next Tarantino release, I would gladly oblige because "Kill Bill: Volume 1" delivers. This movie is just damn fun.

MOVIE REVIEW

The plot is purposefully simple. Uma Thurman's character, "The Bride," is part of the Deadly Viper Assassination Squad (DIVAS) headed by the faceless Bill. The DIVAS are paid killers of the highest caliber, vaguely reminiscent of "Charlie's Angels" and the fictional "Fox Force Five" mentioned in "Pulp Fiction." The pregnant Bride decides to leave the squad but is gunned down by fellow assassins on her wedding day when Bill puts a bullet in her head. However, The Bride not only survives, she awakens from a coma to find her unborn child missing. Bent on revenge, she sets out to kill Bill and the fellow assassins who betrayed her.

This movie isn't about plot (like "Pulp Fiction") or character (like "Jackie Brown"); it's about balls-to-the wall action. It's a pure, unadulterated homage to action, cheap samurai flicks, revenge thrillers, and spaghetti westerns; however, it still distinguishes itself from

most American action films. Despite the buckets of fake blood gushing on screen, "Kill Bill" leaves none of the bitter aftertaste that comes with most gratuitous movie violence. In fact, because this film makes no pretense of reality, the gore and dismemberment comes across as strangely beautiful and comical, and the movie achieves a form of fantasy that the only fight scenes of "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" possessed (incidentally, Tarantino used the same stunt director).

Like most directors, Tarantino constructs a fantasy world, but he doesn't pretend his world is governed by, or relates to, the real world that his audience inhabits. This makes "Kill Bill" palatable. The film is completely stylized: Bright colors pop off the screen, characters dress like cartoon characters and when The Bride flies into Tokyo, we are shown slightly cheesy scale models left over from a "Godzilla" film. The final result is something that resembles the bastard child of the 1960s "Batman" television show and a Bruce Lee film.

Other quirks constantly break the audience's sense of illusion — like when The Bride's name is censored with a bleep or a flashback is rendered in anime. These distractions make it possible for the audience not only to suspend their sense of reality but to indulge in fantasy in a way that directors like the Wachowski brothers, or even Jerry Bruckheimer, can't capture.

For example, in the climactic "Showdown at the House of Blue Leaves" scene, The Bride battles a seemingly endless army of Kato-masked henchmen strewn limbs around a Japanese nightclub.

The segment is remarkably similar to Neo's battle with the Agent Smiths in "The Matrix Reloaded," however, "Kill Bill" somehow comes across as more realistic and human. "Kill Bill" personally invests the audience in The Bride's revenge in a way that makes each slice through an anonymous henchman seem like a victory.

The performances by the mainly female cast are superb. Thurman's Bride character possesses such an incredible intensity that her emotions practically bleed from the screen, while Lucy Liu's portrayal of "O-Ren Ishii" (a.k.a. Cottonmouth) is richly rendered with few words. Her performance verges on a minimalist masterpiece. The usually verbose Tarantino gives his characters little dialogue, but "Kill Bill" miraculously leaves the audience fulfilled. The cumulative effect is that when any character actually does speak, the audience hangs on every last syllable.

Unfortunately, we don't really get to see Vivica A. Fox — who plays the fourth assassin, Vernita Green (aka Copperhead), — show off her talent for very long before getting axed by The Bride — one of the few problems with the film.

Bill is played by David Carradine and perhaps gives the best, creepiest performance of the movie using only his disturbing touchy-feely hands and gravelly voice. Tarantino builds an immense



Courtesy

"The Bride" (Uma Thurman) faces off against Bill's henchmen.

amount of suspense by limiting his performance to these parts of the character.

Daryl Hannah plays the one-eyed assassin Elle Driver (a.k.a. California Viper Snake) and appears only briefly. There's something intensely satisfying about her character's cool killer exterior. Her smoldering performance walks the line between comedy and drama and characterizes the schizophrenic nature of this movie. Her character's brief appearance is just a taste of her larger role in "Volume 2" (to be released in February). But ultimately, the first volume is fusion cinema at its best, where the sum of the whole is greater than its parts.

Steven Neuman is a freelance writer for the Emerald.

MUSIC

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room, depending on the quality of sound.

"It's kind of a 'gee whiz' thing," he said. "It sounds pretty cool and the price seems reasonable but if it doesn't have bass, it's not for me."

However, for some, the novelty of new technology takes precedence over product quality.

"I am all for the fetish," visiting mul-

timedia and design professor Joey Bargsten said. "A lot of our current music electronics come from the spirit of toying with technology."

Although he hasn't ever "toyed" with the portable Soundbug or inflatable speakers, he has worked with wearable speakers, which can be attached to various parts of the body like the shoulders. Bargsten said he uses the speakers and other devices to compose musical pieces and direct musicians by using musical notes, pitches and time relationships.

"It's interesting to work with smaller or more subversive devices because it's activating space through a new technology," he said.

Wayne Leeds, manager of the Fabulous Tweeter Brothers stereo store, said he always encounters people with special requests for new speaker technology.

"We've had requests for boat speakers and for underwater speakers, which are just beyond me," he said.

Although the Soundbug and inflatable speakers have yet to hit the shelves

at the 385 W. 2nd Ave. location, Leeds said students like Boehm can always find simple, inexpensive speakers at Tweeters year-round.

Satisfied with his "slightly above budget" speakers for now, Boehm said he can't wait for the price of the new speakers to go down.

"I am excited for technology to get cheaper, especially in stereo speakers," he said.

Contact the business/science/technology reporter at caronalarab@dailyemerald.com.

CAMPUS BUZZ

Friday

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