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Staff Writer

Kill Bill Volume 1: A Review

Quentin Tarantino has done it again. "Kill Bill – Volume 1" is a gory spectacle for the viewer. With outlandish colors, graphic violence, and thrilling battle scenes, "Kill Bill" appears more like live-action anime than anything else.

The story stemmed from an idea shared by Tarantino and lead actress Uma Thurman of a character known only as "The Bride." The character is left for dead after a shootout on her wedding day. After spending four years in a coma, she awakens to find herself in the hospital and her unborn child missing. There's only one thing on The Bride's mind—revenge. So she heads off to settle the score with her assailants (who used to be her compatriots), the Deadly Viper Assassination Squad.

If you're looking for a linear story, this is not the movie for you. Very typical of Tarantino, the film is told out of sequence which allows him to open up with a wicked knife fight between female assassins Vernita Green, a.k.a. Copperhead (Vivica A. Fox) and The Bride, alias Black Mamba (Thurman). This is no catfight; these girls are out for

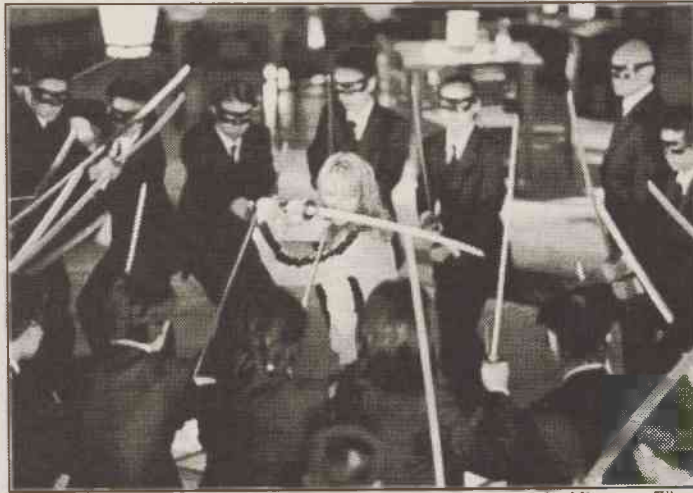


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blood.

While the non-linear approach to storytelling can be refreshing, it makes me wonder how Miramax intends to release this film in two volumes. See, film executives believed that an American audience wouldn't sit through a movie that was three hours long, Tarantino wouldn't compromise his picture by cutting it, so the film has been split into two parts. Volume 1 was released October 10; Volume 2 hits theaters February 20, 2004.

So will the public be willing to

pay not once, but twice to see this picture? My bet is yes. Just as the story really finds its momentum, we hit the hour and a half mark – time to end the movie. We're left with an exciting cliffhanger, a small hint of the action to come, and the strong desire to see the face of the heartless Bill who has thus far remained a disembodied voice.

Besides, Volume 1 really delivers. Thurman turns in a performance like none other she's given. She is one no-nonsense, heartless, female assassin hell bent on revenge. Despite

her grisly purpose, I found myself wishing for her success. The real gem in the film, however, is Lucy Liu as the villainous O-Ren Ishii. Dressed in traditional Japanese costume, she appears like a fragile little flower, but is in actuality a cold, cruel criminal. Cottonmouth is the perfect moniker for her character; she is quick and her bite is deadly.

After hearing rumors of Tarantino's unabashed stealing from other filmmakers, I was worried the film would not even be worth the price. After all, if I wanted to see someone else's work, I can stay at home and rent the originals. But after seeing it, I find "Kill Bill" more of an homage than a rip-off. There are scenes reminiscent of many martial art films, and Tarantino's anime inspiration is obviously felt. But his scenes are his own. With so many "Matrix" imitators in theaters, Tarantino hasn't just thrown his hat in the ring; he's taken everything he's learned and made it his own. It's not a rip-off, but an original, and further proof that Tarantino is one of the best directors this generation will ever see.

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Measure of a Man Proof Of Immeasurable Talent

A breath of fresh air has blown through the world of popular music, and his name is Clay Aiken. His full length CD, *Measure of a Man*, is a wonderful display of the Raleigh native's amazing voice and versatility.

Clay is to the 21st century what Rick Astley (*Never Gonna Give You Up, Together Forever*) was to the 1980's generation. In other words, one would never believe that such powerful pipes could come out of a lanky, unassuming red head.

Regarding both the album and Clay himself, what you see is what you get. There are no references to drinking, partying, or other shameless escapades. There is no violence or gratuitously foul language. All you will hear is a clean, crisp voice singing about the bright side of humanity. The vocal gems are pronged by lively instrumentals and poetic lyrics. His refreshing twist on the definition of a popstar and his incredible talent (okay... and his Southern charm) have given Clay the wide appeal that sold over 200,000 copies of the album in two days.

This is the Night, the single that rocketed Clay to stardom, is one of 12 tracks that stir up a variety of emotions in the listener. In the tradition of Bryan Adams, the voice behind some of rock's most memorable love songs such as *Everything I Do I Do It For You* and *Heaven*, Clay's ballads are romantic without being syrupy. *The Way*, *Perfect Day*, *Run to Me*, and (my personal favorite) *I Will Carry You* are perfect choices if you are looking to set the right mood for a date or if you are planning the soundtrack for your wedding. Going through a heartbreak or a generally rough time? *No More Sad Songs* and *I Survived You* are anthems with a quiet attitude. The title track, *Measure of a Man*, is a thought-provoking journey into what truly makes a human being who he is. You could even get your groove on with two tracks that combine mischievous lyrics with irresistibly catchy rhythms. Believe me...one listen to *Invisible* and *Touch* and you will not be able to get them out of your head.

Fans who are looking for the Broadway-esque and easy listening pieces that Clay performed on *American Idol* will not find any such fare on this album. However, Clay proves that his voice lends itself to other genres as well. Even if squeaky-clean, bubblegum melodies aren't your idea of good tunes, *Measure of a Man* has at least one track that will cause even the most hard-core music critics to feel the inexplicable urge to tap their toes or slow dance. And if you do think Clay Aiken is the greatest thing to come out of North Carolina since tar heels and dogwoods, then go out and pick up a copy of the album and support our hometown hero.

With a style that conjures the sophistication of Frank Sinatra, the sensuality of Enrique Iglesias and his own quirkiness, Clay Aiken is a breed apart in an industry that is full of talentless sell-outs molded from the same shapeless cookie cutter and tasteless dough.

The verdict: *Measure of a Man* is not without its flaws, but Clay's first effort is admirable and pleasant enough to crank up on your stereo without having to worry about pressing the skip button every other track.



photo by Jonelle Kimbrough