

Quips, calm pervade 'Bill, Vol. 2'

BY MICHAEL PUCCI
ASSISTANT ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

Before we get down to business, let's take this moment and share a quick word about "Kill Bill, Vol. 1."

Gory, opulently bloody and downright hilarious, it was panned for pound the most entertaining film of 2003. Its only competition might have been "Pirates of the Caribbean," but that's as long as you don't compare soundtracks.

Those who dismissed "Vol. 1" as a mindless excursion into redundant violence missed the point entirely — it was ambitious, clever and the action sequences were nothing short of spectacular.

And the cliffhanger? Brilliant. Finally, half a year later, the long-awaited sequel has arrived, replete with Quentin Tarantino's vintage style of dialogue and humor.

Still, while "Vol. 2" doesn't possess the same jaw-dropping quality its predecessor did, it succeeds with the type of character development many people felt "Vol. 1" lacked.

So where were we? By the end of "Vol. 1," Uma Thurman had "roared and rampaged" through through two-fifths of her "People to Kill" list, culminating in the astonishing showdown with O-ren Ishii and her innumerable bodyguards at the House of Blue Leaves.

MOVIEREVIEW

"KILL BILL, VOL. 2"

★★★★

It's not giving anything away to say the remaining targets on her list also meet their untimely ends in "Vol. 2," usually in grisly fashion, but the fight sequences aren't as elaborate and the body count has been noticeably reduced.

Still, unforgettable scenes abound, such as Elle Driver (Daryl Hannah) administering a delightfully perverted form of last rites to Budd (Michael Madsen) as he writhes on the floor.

True to form, the story jumps back and forth in time, and by the final confrontation, Thurman's saga has been put into perspective. This isn't strictly a revenge film anymore.

You also begin to understand why Tarantino split "Kill Bill" into two parts — "Vol. 2" is much more deliberately paced than the first.

The highlight of "Vol. 2" is unquestionably the acting. It would be easy for these characters, whose dialogue tends to be theatrically overwrought, to be reduced to mere caricatures. But each actor brings instant credibility to their roles — who else but Madsen could have portrayed the pathetic, beer-guzzling Budd?



COURTESY OF MIRAMAX FILMS

Uma Thurman, the mysterious "Bride," tries to complete her cinematic quintet of carnage by capping her remaining marks in "Kill Bill, Vol. 2."

"Vol. 2" also boasts career-defining performances from Thurman as The Bride and David Carradine as the elusive Bill.

Carradine's role in "Vol. 1" was shrouded in mystery — heard but never seen, his gravelly voice reciting lines like "This is me at my most masochistic."

He comes into his own this time around, owning the last half of the film. We even feel a twinge of regret following his rather anti-climactic confrontation with The Bride.

Thurman in particular reveals facets of her character other action

films rarely bother hinting at in their protagonists.

Watch her reaction the moment she walks into Bill's house and finds him playing with their daughter — it's heartbreaking and infuriating at the same time.

With "Kill Bill," Tarantino has written and directed his third masterpiece, a work that should cement his legacy as one of the most consistently innovative filmmakers of our time.

Contact the A&E Editor at artsdesk@unc.edu.

Bob Schneider claims 'I'm Good' — filthy liar

BY KATE LORD
STAFF WRITER

"Good" must be the most ambiguous and nonspecific word in the English language, with meanings ranging from "desirable" to "worthy of respect" to "benevolent."

Its antonym, however, is easily defined: Bob Schneider's lyrics.

While the musicality of his latest album, *I'm Good Now*, is satisfactory, the lyrics are utterly elementary and simply baffling. Consider the album's first two lines: "Oh there's Johnny he's so sweet/ He's booger sugar and devil's meat."

Any album that uses the word "booger" in a serious manner had better be stellar in every other respect.

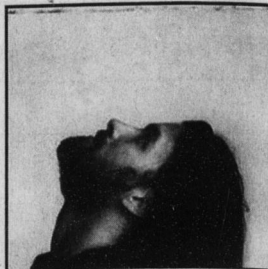
But *I'm Good Now* isn't — while the soothing guitar and gentle drumming blend well with Schneider's smooth, deep voice, the result isn't great enough to make up for the "booger" faux pas.

On top of the rudimentary nature of the lyrics, they're also extremely predictable. Schneider suffers from an addiction to couplets — seven of the album's 13 songs are constructed in this manner, accentuated by such hackneyed sentiments as, "You got the cure for what is ailing me/ Only your sweet love can set me free."

At this point, the listener wants to scream, "Egads, man! Hire yourself a songwriter!"

Schneider, who is credited with the album's songwriting, vocals, guitar, keyboards, drums, bass, programming and percussion, is capable in the instrumental portions. Were it not for his lyrics, his music would be somewhat pleasing.

He's at his best on his acoustic, folksy songs. "A Long Way to Get," stands out with a plodding, cheery theme, complete with a major-key synthesized back beat and singers cooing in the background.



MUSICREVIEW

BOB SCHNEIDER

I'M GOOD NOW

★★

The twanging guitar and prevalent bass of these gladsome numbers are where he excels. Not all of the tracks are like these, however.

Schneider seems unsure of what genre he wants to be associated with. Acoustic guitar dominates the beginning of the album, creating a folksy feeling. But slowly, the music takes on a poppish quality, including dramatic musical pauses and lines electronically echoed in the background.

Suddenly, toward the middle, Schneider decides he wants to be an alternative rocker, contrasting whispering with screaming and loud electric guitars. His vocals are not well suited to such fare — the folk rock worked because his voice is so tranquil.

His yelling attempts just sound forced and unnatural.

By the end of the album, the listener is clouded with confusion caused by both the nonsensical lyrics and the discontinuity of genre.

Find some better material and stick to folk rock, Bob.

Contact the A&E Editor at artsdesk@unc.edu.

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