

Symphony of Vengeance

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Scottish poet Robert Burns once wrote

“Where sits our sulky, sullen dame,
Gathering her brows like gathering storm,
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.” (from Tam O' Shanter)

It is a good way of looking at Kill Bill and Sympathy for Lady Vengeance. Women given time to plot their vengeance against a man who has wronged them. The two stories hold very similar themes but the choice of accompanying sound tracks could not be more different.

Quentin Tarantino's Kill Bill is a very slick film. And the sound track it must be awesome, after all it's most famous track “Battle without honour or humanity,” was used in just about every marketing campaign that could in any way justify a racy anthem. It was a very good track. Alas, the rest of the album was surprisingly disappointing. There are only about 3 tracks that wont make you hit the skip button on your iPod. Tarantino seems to be a big fan of 70s music, even the modern tunes performed by RZA have a 70's feel to them. They seem to be reminiscent of the music of the Kung Fu films of that era. The effect the music has is to remove the serious point of vengeance and make it more like a Japanese Manga cartoon.

Sympathy for lady Vengeance also uses a retro music, mainly made up from Baroque classics. The Director, Chan-wook Park, used the music to make a dreamy feel to the film although the actual dream sequences have no music. It alludes to the European religious themes that weave in and out of the plot. The harpsichord does give the film a quirky unsettling feel and only seems to punctuate the film when an change of emotion is needed.

As irritating as most of the music on Kill Bill is, Tarantino obviously measures his choice of music carefully in order to make the music work. He does create a gathering storm in the soundtrack. This does build for a vengeful climax. Park's use of music does not seem so deeply thought through but it does maintain a sulky and sullen feeling within the film, always nursing the wrath keeping it warm for the uncomfortable diffusion of vengeance.