

## Jackie Brown

Based on the novel *Rum Punch* by popular crime writer Elmore Leonard, Quentin Tarantino's long-awaited follow-up to his breakthrough *Pulp Fiction* takes place in familiar Tarantino country of profane, petty hustlers flitting around the margins of the big score, constantly testing each others loyalty, prone to menace and betrayal. The complex plot involves a down-at-the-heels flight attendant, Jackie Brown (Pam Grier), and her involvement with a testy gun-runner Ordell Robbie (Samuel L. Jackson), an ATF agent Nicolette (Michael Keaton) trying to get the goods on her, and a bail bondsman Max Cheery (Robert Forster) on her case--and interested in her. The set-up is leisurely and careful, and the payoff is an elaborate scam that Jackie, with her partner Max, pulls on her antagonists.

That payoff has Tarantino again playing with time sequences as he has in his earlier films, this time presenting a bag-with-the-money switching sequence from three different perspectives--Jackie's, Ordell's and Max's--one right after the other in a cool cinematic choreography. The characters may not be that fully drawn, but the logic of the film is unassailable.

Where *Jackie Brown* truly differs from Tarantino's first two films is in the level of violence. The killings--there are inevitably killings--are few and crisp and almost off-screen. The squeamish who have heard nasty things about Tarantino movies might be relieved to hear there are no lingering blood gushings or brain splatterings. Pam Grier, resuscitated from her 70's blaxploitation days, is a statuesque, if rather stolid presence. The great Samuel L. Jackson exudes threat as the pitiless Ordell. Bridget Fonda and Robert De Niro are adequate in thinner, but distinctive secondary roles.

The real surprise is Robert Forster, back from filmdom's dead as the unflappable Max. With everybody else around him losing it, Max is ever calm and stoic. His sangfroid among the manics makes him the solid center of the film, the serenity within the storm.

(*The film is rated "R" for violence and tough language.*)

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