

## Film Review: 'The Killer Inside Me' a Study in Sociopathic Blandness

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on June 27, 2010 - 10:09am

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – Michael Winterbottom's '50s-era neo-noir "The Killer Inside Me" creeps up on you in the creepiest possible way. Just as I was ready to write it off, I ended up caving in to its charms, or lack thereof. This film often seems as utterly cuckoo as its central antihero, and that's what makes it so darn mesmerizing. Sure, it's sort of a mess, but boy is it engrossing, with a strong emphasis on the gross.

Casey Affleck's role as deputy sheriff Lou Ford isn't a million miles removed from his Oscar-nominated channeling of "the coward Robert Ford," a role he played to perfection opposite Brad Pitt in Andrew Dominik's woefully underrated 2007 western. Yet while Robert's bloody deeds were motivated by relatable human emotions (jealousy being the most prominent), Lou is inspired, or rather controlled, by an inner-voice. The urge to kill washes over him like a dark, oil-drenched wave. He is as frightening a sociopath as Anton Chigurh, but Affleck hardly has to lift an eyebrow in order to convey a sense of palpable menace.



[Read Matt Fagerholm's full review of "The Killer Inside Me" in our reviews section.](#) [13]

Though Affleck has clearly proven himself to be a more gifted actor than his older brother, it remains difficult to determine whether he possesses any real range. His mumbled line delivery occasionally renders his dialogue unintelligible, while his facial expressions include an odd half-closing of his eyes that makes it look as if he'll drift off at any moment. It took me a good long while to warm up to his performance in "The Assassination of Jesse James," and it took me even longer to admire his work in "The Killer Inside Me." Based on the novel by pulp crime author Jim Thompson, the film opens with Sheriff Ford falling into an animalistic affair with the prostitute that he's been assigned to evict from his benign west Texas town. While the prostitute (played unconvincingly by Jessica Alba) views him as a viable boyfriend, Ford sees her as an opportunity to settle a few scores. This leads to a scene of shocking brutality that has deservedly garnered the film instant notoriety.

Structurally, "Killer" is reminiscent of Hitchcock's "Psycho," with Alba cast in the Janet Leigh role, and Affleck evoking Norman Bates's mask of politeness and sexually arrested maternal demons. It must have been Winterbottom's sick joke to hire Alba for a role in which her pretty face gets beaten to a bloody pulp. As in "Psycho," the film's most extreme act of violence occurs about a half-hour in, and creates an atmosphere of dread that reverberates throughout the rest of the picture. While the scene isn't quite as appalling and unwatchable as the similar instance of skull-bashing in Gaspar Noe's "Irreversible," it still easily ranks as the most viscerally disturbing sequence of Winterbottom's career. Its protracted length and graphic intensity is reminiscent of the equally controversial sex scenes in "9 Songs." While that film explored sex lives devoid of feeling or meaning, "Killer" enters the psyche of a man who destroys others purely out of compulsion. In both instances, Winterbottom's objective lens erases the exploitative nature of the material, with a great assist from longtime cinematographer Marcel Zyskind, who shoots every picture like a fly-on-the-wall documentary.



[Continuing reading for Matt Fagerholm's full "The Killer Inside Me" review.](#) [13]

*'The Killer Inside Me' stars Casey Affleck, Kate Hudson, Jessica Alba, Ned Beatty, Elias Koteas, Tom Bower, Simon Baker, Liam Aiken and Bill Pullman. It was written by John Curran and Michael Winterbottom and directed by Michael Winterbottom. It opened on June 25th at the Music Box. It is rated R.*



The Killer Inside Me

*Photo credit: IFC Films*

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