

## Blu-ray Review: 'The Man with the Iron Fists' Scrapes Bottom of Kung Fu Barrel

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CHICAGO – “The Man with the Iron Fists” is the most tedious picture in many a moon. How, you may ask, can wall-to-wall action possibly be tedious? Two reasons: 1.) The action is nonstop, and 2.) The characters are impossible to care about. The single take of Uma Thurman’s devastated outburst upon awakening from her coma is the emotional hook that keeps the audience engaged as she wreaks her path of vengeance through both volumes of “Kill Bill.”

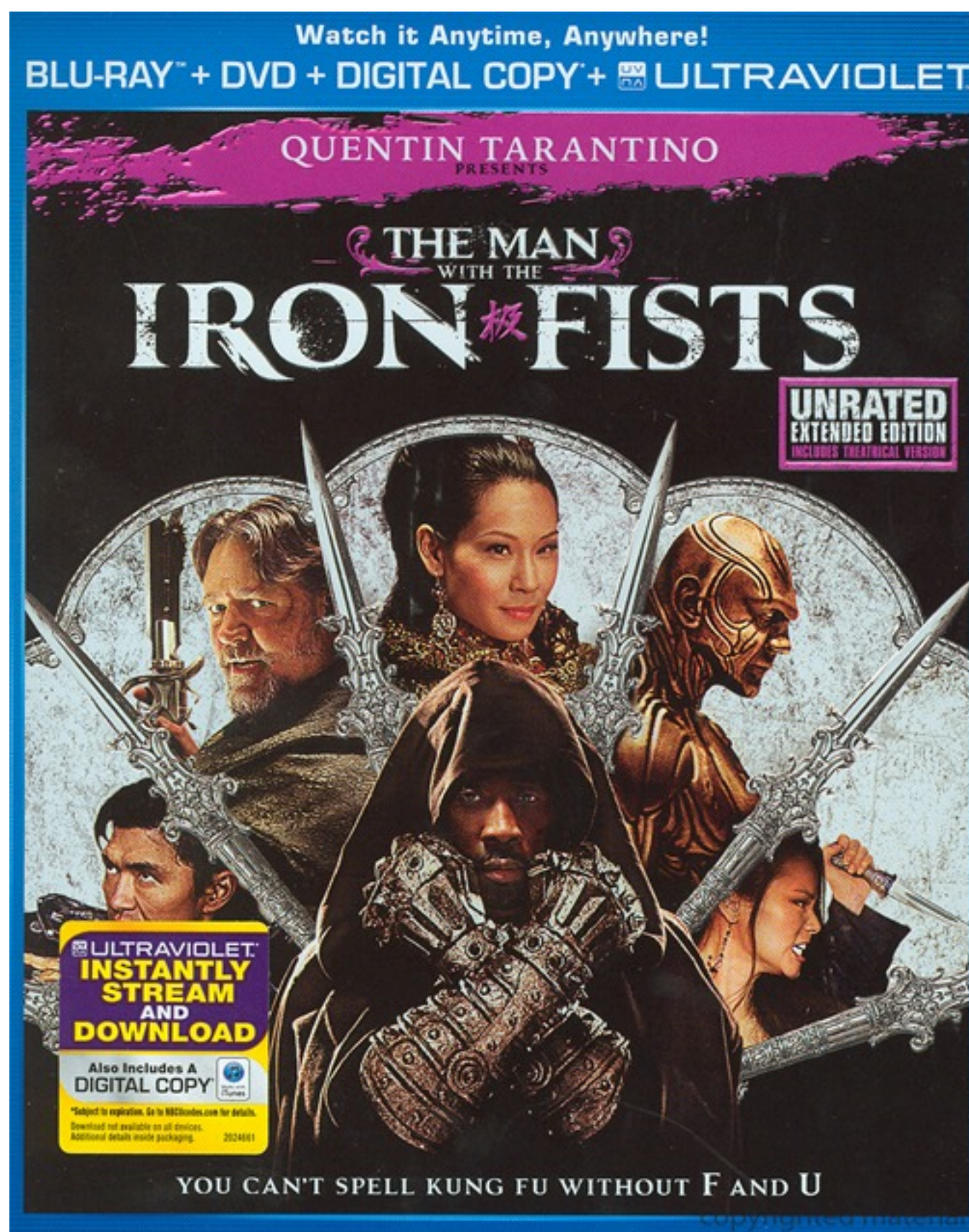
RZA’s unfortunate directorial debut lacks that crucial moment designed to spur an audience’s emotional involvement. Instead, it hurls the viewer headfirst through an assortment of blood-spattered plot threads so needlessly complicated and breathlessly detailed that they are rendered quickly incoherent. The plot doesn’t matter anyway, since it serves solely as a clothesline for gratuitous action sequences recycled from older, vastly superior kung fu blockbusters—the kind that RZA and his pal Quentin Tarantino have memorized since the early days of their moviegoing lives.



Blu-ray Rating: **1.0/5.0**

RZA supplied some memorable music for the climactic battle scene in “Kill Bill: Vol. 1,” so it’s only natural that Tarantino would want to serve as “presenter” (not producer) of his first big-screen spectacle. Sadly, QT has a reputation for presenting unwatchable vanity projects for his buddies (Larry Bishop’s “Hell Ride” comes to mind), and this slickly lensed dreck is no exception. Mumbling his dialogue without any trace of expression or personality, RZA delivers one of the year’s very worst performances as a vengeful blacksmith who escapes his American slaveholders only to get his arms lopped off in feudal China. Luckily, his new iron appendages transform him into a two-fisted warrior under the tutelage of Mr. Knife (Russell Crowe, borrowing his Javert costume from “Les Misérables”). Even though this film was released a month before Tarantino’s latest (and weakest) directorial effort, “Fists” plays like a Z-grade rehash of “Django Unchained,” with RZA and Crowe standing in for Jamie Foxx and Christoph Waltz. The awful script co-authored by Eli Roth (whose career highlight is still his faux “Thanksgiving” trailer) has none of the wit or suspense that make even Tarantino’s worst films worthwhile. Even the subtitled dialogue is clunky. When RZA tests his iron fists by punching holes through walls, a nearby crowd of kids exclaim, “Wow! Very formidable!” Wow, indeed.





The Man with the Iron Fists was released on Blu-ray and DVD on February 12th, 2013.

Photo credit: Universal Studios Home Entertainment

Some icons whose careers received a momentary boost from Tarantino's fanboy love turn up in throwaway cameos (Pam Grier, Gordon Liu), while the agelessly radiant Lucy Liu again proves that she is never more photogenic than when she's walking purposefully toward the lens, sporting a pokerface of formidable impenetrability (though nothing tops her slo-mo strut down the hallway in "Kill Bill: Vol. 1"). You know an action movie is in trouble when its most thrilling choreography consists of walking. The only glimmer of potential arises in the outfit worn by "The X-Blade" (Rick Yune), which includes a series of concealed knives that come in handy during the film's one diverting fight. There's also some potential intrigue in the scene where X-Blade encounters his arch enemy in a hall of mirrors (a la "The Lady from Shanghai"), but like everything else in RZA's all-too-busy misfire, its potential remains unrealized.

"The Man with the Iron Fists" is presented in 1080p High Definition (with a 2.40:1 aspect ratio), accompanied by English, Spanish and French audio tracks and is available in a BD-Live-enabled Blu-ray/DVD/digital copy/Ultraviolet combo pack equipped with a pocket BLU app. Extras include an unrated cut (adding 12 minutes to the running time), 24 minutes of deleted scenes that flesh out the film's overabundance of subplots, and a few featurettes so glib they might as well be labeled featurette teasers. A commentary track in which RZA discussed his cinematic influences while shedding light on the multitude of homages his film paid would've at least brought some much-needed substance to this depressingly shallow mess.

*'The Man with the Iron Fists' is released by Universal Studios Home Entertainment and stars RZA, Russell Crowe, Cung Le, Lucy Liu, Byron Mann, Rick Yune, David Bautista and Jamie Chung. It was written by RZA and Eli Roth and directed by RZA. It was released on February 12th, 2013. The theatrical cut is rated R.*

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