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A bounty on his head, the Executioner takes his war to a new front

When Mafia pressure destroyed his family, sniper Mack Bolan declared war on organized crime. The Battle of Pittsfield left dozens of mobsters dead, but that was only the beginning. Hunted by the police, the FBI, and every hood in America, Mack plans his next attack. In Los Angeles he crashes a swinger's party and finds his old army buddy George Zitka tied to a chair, being tortured by a few Mafia heavies. Seconds later they are dead, and Mack and Zit are talking about getting the old gang back together. It's time to form a death squad.

Bolan wants sharpshooters and scouts, demo experts and hard-core killers—ten soldiers forged in the fires of Vietnam. With them he will escalate the war against the Mafia as the Death Squad lives up to its name.

Death Squad Details

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From Reader Review Death Squad for online ebook

Donna Gettings Apperson says

I'm not sure why I have been reading the Executioner books. The early ones like I'm reading are way before the internet, so maybe that has something to do with it. No cameras, no constant videos from smart phones, no Big Brother type witnesses everywhere. That's the only way these guys can get away with what they're doing for sure. Anyway, the war against the mafia continues and our anti-hero is determined to wipe them out. I'll give the third book a try before I make a final determination. It's like I want to know what's next, but don't want to put myself through the mayhem. Go figure!

Matt says

3.5 stars out of 5

I don't like the sequel to War against the mafia as much as I did that one. Mainly because, in Death Squad, the idea is Mack needs help in his one man War so he recruits old Nam' buddies to his cause. Which would be fine if it was only a few, but its like 10 people.. and they all get a POV. As such, Mack has to take a back seat. Plus you have the cop portion, corrupt cops as well this time around. its where the book being so short hurts. Cause you can't give so many characters equal time.

First part of the book, where Mack rescues a buddy from thugs while a swinger party is going on is pretty fun. Some of the Death Squad characters are really intriguing but don't get used to most of them being around going forward.

Don's writing is actually improved a bit and the action is more polished if a bit less reckless than the first.

Another plus of the book is the lack of sex scenes... I don't mind them but it also halts the plot a bit which would have made this book even worse.

Still a solid read.

Edwin says

Mack Bolan rounds up a team of his former Viet Nam colleagues for a "Death Squad" in his continued war with the Mafia in this action-packed second entry in the series. Much of the action takes place while driving the streets of Los Angeles which reminded me of the Fast and Furious movies. The ten members recruited for the Death Squad seemed a bit excessive and it was hard to keep them straight. A couple of them end up being members of the spin-off series "Able Team" along with a rogue cop who is also introduced in this novel, so this book is probably one of the more essential reads in the Executioner extended universe.

Mike (the Paladin) says

Mack on the run from the "Mafia" with a \$1,000,000 (in 1970 dollars) price on his head puts together his

own "team" and takes on the LA mob...and sort of ticks off the police.

Before I went in the army back in the early 70s I read several of these books. Being a shooter/gun enthusiast Pendelton's detailed account of the weapons used (something i'm sure drove some people away from the books) I found very interesting. Aside from that the stories were adrenaline charged violent thrill rides and that's all that young men need sometimes.

If you want a good fast exciting read find the early Executioner books. As a point of interest I read that Marvel acknowledged that "some" inspiration for The Punisher came from The Executioner as did "some" for DCs The Vigilante.

I can only recommend the "early" books in this series written by Pendelton himself (the first 38 I believe though I haven't read all of them. Oh, and #16 was written by someone else during a contract dispute.) The more recent books from after the time Pendelton sold the rights to the series I found, well, very poor. Just me.

Timothy Boyd says

An excellent men's adventure series from the 60s, 70's and 80's. The first 38 books are outstanding but then the series is taken over by a bunch of new writers, writing under the name of the original creator and they take the series into a new direction I did not care for. The first 38 books are very recommended

Troy says

i got hooked on this series back in the 80's I read all the way up to 100 or more then stoped.And now Im starting over. I liked it then and I like it know.A lot of action which I like in books.They tend to keep you on edge and you just don't want to put the book down you just want to what will happen next.

Dave says

The second book in the Executioner series is another very solid men's action success. The series, in fact, particularly the original 38 books, are among the best of the men's action books of the seventies.

Vietnam-era sniper Mack Bolan finds that the loansharking machinations of the Mafia have obliterated his family with his father, having found that the sister had been forced to turn tricks to pay the debt, turned a gun on his family and himself. Bolan, allowed s sympathy reassignment to the States to watch over his younger brother, singlehandedly declares war on the Mafia and proves to be a most formidable foe.

In this second novel, the Mafia targets Bolan's old buddies and Bolan decides it's time for reinforcements, putting together a motley crew of Vietnam Vets. What follows is absolute war with convoys, rocket launchers, armored cars, and more.

Personally, I found this one to be just a notch below the first book. It

simply wasn't as compelling.

Jon Guenther says

Rock solid like Bolan

Wouldn't call this one as good as its predecessor, but a solid hit all the same. This is where Bolan realizes he'll have to go it alone for his War Everlasting. This book also introduced the three characters that would become Able Team in the spinoff series, and so it's an important book for fans on that count alone.

Luke Sims-Jenkins says

Book 2 of the Executioner series was a fun read. I remembered some of the things that would happen from when I read this book over 20 years ago and yet it was still a fun ride. What I think sets this apart from your typical men's adventure novels though is what Mr Pendleton has to say about Vietnam vets and this was a book written in 1969 before the war was over. So an extra star for that bit of social commentary.

Gary Peterson says

Death Squad is even better than the series' opening salvo, *War Against the Mafia*. Suspenseful, action-packed, and meaningful in showing how a band of brothers answer a comrade's call to come together for a common cause.

The story also shows the rootlessness and restlessness of Vietnam vets. I enjoyed the recruitment scenes when Mack Bolan is rounding up old friends and finding so many of them idling and dissipating. These men returned from 'Nam and failed to find a foothold in the world. Pendleton includes a commentary on this situation in a scene where one cop laments how the talents of Bolan and his Death Squad are being wasted: "Think of what they could, with those brains and energies, if they--" "What could they do?" Lyons asked, quietly interrupting. "I mean, really, what could they do? They became men in a different sort of world--entirely different." (135)

Scholars of the Vietnam War will probably overlook The Executioner novels, which is unfortunate because they boast insights and a valuable perspective on the returning vet.

But lest one think the novel is a tract on the plight of soldiers coming home, it's anything but. The action is unrelenting. Pendleton deftly switches scenes between Bolan and his ten-man Death Squad plotting their attacks, the cops planning their strategy, and the mobsters plotting theirs. For the reader, knowing what all three parties are planning to do heightens the suspense to where it's difficult not to flip a few pages ahead to assure oneself all turns out well.

Pendleton is writing men's adventure fiction, but that doesn't mean it's just mindless violence piled upon carnage and conflagrations. He exceeds expectations for characterization. Sgt. Carl Lyons, for example, is well defined. We see him as the professional cop at work, but also as the harried husband grocery shopping and worried his wife will be angry if he forgot something, and as the loving Dad to his young son Tommy.

Pendleton provides the reader just enough to make him three-dimensional and a character worth caring about.

Captain "Big Tim" Braddock, head of the special squash-Bolan Hardcase task force, is drawn a little more sketchily, but we get sufficient glimpses of him to know he's a good guy committed to upholding the law. When Bolan's Blackfoot Indian comrade Tom "Bloodbrother" Loudelk infiltrates Police HQ unbeknownst to the powers that be, Braddock calls him "sir." Bad cop Rickert reveals his toxic prejudice when he calls out his captain, *"That's twentieth century, eh? Saying 'sir' to a wetback?"* *"That's right," Braddock replied through tight lips. "A citizen is a citizen, and every one of them rates a 'sir' in this building--until they're booked, anyway. And he wasn't a wetback. I'd say Cherokee or Navajo. That's about as citizen as you can get."* (107)

Just this short exchange reveals a lot about the characters. That Pendleton does it so deftly and imperceptibly, weaving it seamlessly into the narrative, is a testimony to his talent.

The outcome of the climactic scene was not wholly unexpected, but nonetheless proved moving. And if Bolan's grand escape and *deus ex machina* appearance stretched credulity at the end, it was just too cool to quibble over. I thoroughly enjoyed this book from line to last. It sets the bar high for all the Pendleton-penned Bolan adventures to come.

Douglas Fugate says

This is the second of the Mack Bolan Executioner novels. Here Mack is joined by nine of his former Viet Nam war buddies to take on the Mob in L.A. Here Mack also finds a Police Task Force is formed to bring him in. War violence in an urban setting throughout the book. A very quick read.

Quentin Wallace says

[I will reveal this. Only two members of the Death Squad survive. There's also a police officer that is sympathetic to Bolan's cause in this volume. Why is this important? Those three characters go on to form Able Team, who had a fa

Daniel says

This review originally published in Looking For a Good Book. Rated 3.75 of 5

I continue to be surprised by this series. I had expected that each book in the Executioner series would be a unique story of Mack Bolan taking on the mob. It is, sort of, but it's also a much more sequential book, meaning it's very helpful to have read the first in the series to really pick up on what's going on.

Mack Bolan is a Vietnam war hero. He's one of the best sniper's in the military. He is able to detach himself from the human part of his emotions when killing a human target. But Mack has to return to the United

States to bury members of his family who died as a result of actions taken by the mob. Bolan then goes on a one-man-army crusade to take on the mob.

Well...except that it's not entirely a one-man army. In this book Bolan recruits a number of vets, all who have had trouble readjusting to life in the United States in a time when Vietnam vets aren't particularly welcomed by society. Bolan, also known as The Executioner, puts together his own "Death Squad" to take on some major mob targets. Those targets are in the Los Angeles area. The Los Angeles police, aware of Bolan and his skills, prepares a special unit devoted just to the capture or otherwise stopping of The Executioner, learning, only a little too late, of all the other members of the squad who are now helping Bolan.

What makes The Executioner a little different from the 'average' serial killer, is that he works on a very special, moral code meaning that only the 'bad' guys get killed and good cops are to be avoided at all costs.

As one might expect from a book about an 'Executioner' - there is plenty of violence, but surprisingly very little gore. In today's literary world of flesh-dripping zombies and blood-sucking vampires, gore is pretty common. But this book is about a man with a strong morality on the one hand and a strong drive to right wrongs even if it means stepping over the morality line. Military training.

Author Don Pendleton does hit the reader over the head with this moral code in order to drive the point home that Bolan is a nice guy, even though he's killing people.

There is not quite as much non-stop action in this volume because we're setting up a whole crew of new people (those on Bolan's side, as well as the cops trying to stop him) in a new location. But once the action gets rolling it's fast and furious, as one expects from this sort of pulp action story.

I'm enjoying this series much more than I anticipated and it's easy to see why it has had such longevity.

Looking for a good book? If you are looking for some thrilling action with a strong central character but want the read to be quick and easy, then *Death Squad*, by Don Pendleton is just the ticket. But be warned ... you'll probably get hooked on the whole series.

Adam says

A lot of people seem to prefer this novel to its predecessor, but I find this unfathomable. While *Death Squad* was an enjoyable read, it measured up poorly against *War Against the Mafia*. After the grit and realism of that first novel, its sequel often seems almost cartoonish. The biggest stumbling block to my enjoyment of *Death Squad*, however, is the speed and ease with which Bolan is able to assemble his squad of fellow Vietnam veterans. Every single ex-serviceman he contacts is eager to join his war, and at no point does even one of them contemplate giving up. After the lengths that Pendleton went to in his first novel to paint a believable picture of a man who is driven to the edge by the deaths of his parents and sister, the introduction of nine new characters, most of whom are barely two-dimensional, seems somewhat ridiculous. Perhaps I would have had an easier time swallowing the action in *Death Squad* if Bolan had only recruited three or four old war buddies, and we had gotten more of a chance to know them. I liked "Chopper" Fontenelli, "Dead-Eye" Washington, "Pol" Blancanales, and "Gadgets" Schwarz, but didn't feel as if Pendleton gave himself enough time to properly flesh out their characters. They emerge as dedicated and likeable soldiers, but that's about it. The remaining members of Bolan's hastily assembled squad are either total ciphers (like George "Whispering Death" Zitka), or gimmicky caricatures instead of real people. (Did we really need The Cowboy, The Indian, and The Hippy?) Aside from that, however, *Death Squad* was a fun read. The action is

abundant, fast-paced, and well-written, especially the final pair of assaults on the Mafia. I liked the introduction of Carl Lyons's character, and thought both scenes in which he meets Bolan face-to-face were tense and full of portent. Overall, *Death Squad* is enjoyable (at least by crummy pulp novels standards), and a nice backbone to the "trilogy" formed by the first three Executioner novels.

Jon Koebrick says

Death Squad is pure male fantasy testosterone action about revenge enacted against the mafia by a Vietnam War soldier in the early 1970s. A 3 star book based on the nonstop action and quick storytelling. Not an intellectual venture but entertaining nonetheless.
